







S E R M O N S

ON THE

GOSPELS,

FOR

EVERY SUNDAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR,

WITH

AN APPROPRIATE SERMON FOR THE
FIRST AND LAST SUNDAY.

BY THE

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SERMON XXVII.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE LOST SHEEP.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xv. v. 1-10. At that time, the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him ; and the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them ; and he spoke to them this parable, saying, What man of you hath a hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it ? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing, and coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost ? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. Or what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it ? And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost ? So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.

THE scribes and Pharisees having censured the conduct of our blessed Saviour, because he was seen in the company and at the tables of persons, who, on account of their immorality, were denominated sinners,—which, they pretended, was inconsistent with that unblemished sanctity of character attributed to him, he delivered in his justification the parables contained in the Gospel

of this Sunday. But as both have evidently the same import, I shall confine my attention to the first, and shall draw from it such reflections as the consideration of it will obviously suggest. In this parable, then, my friends, our divine Saviour exhibits himself to our view in the pleasing character of a shepherd, who, perceiving that one of his sheep has unfortunately strayed from the rest of the flock, makes it instantly the chief object of his pastoral solicitude. Leaving the remainder to graze in security and comfort on the rich pastures with which he has provided them, he goes immediately in pursuit of the unhappy wanderer that is gone astray, seeks it diligently with unwearied research, and when at length he has the happiness to find it, takes it up in his arms, places it upon his shoulders, carries it back in triumph to the fold, and celebrates with festivity, amidst the cordial congratulations of his assembled friends, the happy result of his successful exertions. What a delightful picture is this, my friends, of the tenderness and anxiety displayed by the great Shepherd of our souls for the conversion of sinners, who, in consequence of their abandonment of the rich pastures of truth and virtue, and of their evagations into the barren and cheerless wilds of error and iniquity, may be aptly compared to sheep that have gone astray! What an unanswerable refutation was it of the unjust animadversions of the supercilious Pharisees! And with what an admirable example does it furnish the ministers of the

Gospel of the earnestness and industry which it becomes them to manifest for the reclamation of the sinner from his evil ways, of the tenderness which it behoves them to exhibit in his behalf, and of the satisfaction which they should experience at so joyful an event ! In humble imitation, therefore, of that great model of Christian shepherds, I will set out immediately in pursuit of thee, thou poor unhappy wanderer from the rich pastures of eternal life. I will seek thee through all the intricate windings in which sin may have involved thee. I will search the thickets of worldly cares and sensual gratifications in which thou mayest be entangled. I will ascend to the summits of the loftiest mountains to which thy presumptuous confidence may possibly have raised thee. I will lift up my voice on high till every hill and every valley of thy disordered conscience re-echo to the sound. Happy, thrice happy, if, rousing thee by it to a just sense of thy deplorable condition, I determine thee to yield to its salutary admonitions. Then, and not till then, shall I know that I have found thee. And when I shall have found thee, I will bear thee back with joy to the companions of thy former happiness ; and I will invite my friends and neighbours, if so I may be permitted to call them, the just I mean in heaven, and the just on earth, to unite their voices with mine in canticles of thanksgiving to our common Shepherd for the happy restoration of the poor lost sheep.

O then, sinner, unfortunate sinner, whatever be the cause of your lamentable neglect of the duties of religion,—whether your extreme solicitude concerning the affairs of earth prevent you from attending to the concerns of eternity,—or habits of criminal indulgence which you are unwilling to part with, hold you captive in the chains of sin, or your presumptuous confidence in the boundless mercy of Heaven delude you with the persuasion that the present gratification of your disorderly inclinations is compatible with your eternal interests ; or, finally, whether your dread of God's tremendous judgments induce you to apprehend that your return to the path of virtue would be ineffectual to avert from you the impending storm of his avenging justice, listen to the admonitions which a sincere regard for your everlasting welfare has prompted me this day to submit to your consideration,—and which may He who has the heart of man at his disposal cause to be productive of their desired effects.

Tell me, then, sinner, O unfortunate sinner, tell me, in the first place, why will you allow an excessive anxiety respecting earthly things to withhold your attention from the great business of eternity ? Is it wise, is it rational, is it consistent with the plain dictates of common-sense, to suffer trifles light as air to hinder you from attending to matters of the most weighty consequence ? Such, however, are even the most important objects of your worldly pursuits compared with the infinitely

more momentous affair of your everlasting salvation. For "what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, yet lose his own soul?" Were it necessary, therefore, to abandon altogether either the one or the other, it will not admit of a doubt to which of the two the preference should be given. But the fact is, that the prosecution of the one does not by any means imply a renunciation of the other. I say not therefore to you, withdraw yourself entirely from earthly occupations; disengage yourself totally from temporal concerns; desist from every undertaking by which your condition in life may be improved, and devote yourself without reserve to exercises of piety. No: I say not so. But I say to you with St. Paul, "I would have you to be without solicitude." (1 Cor. c. vii. v. 32.) Yes, "I would have you to be without solicitude." I would have you to lay aside that extreme anxiety respecting worldly concerns, which is an impediment to the discharge of your religious duties. And what injury, may I be permitted to ask, can your temporal interests be thought to sustain from the cultivation of religion, which your undue attention to them occasions you to neglect? What injury will they sustain! What benefit, should I rather say, may they not thence be expected to derive? For on whom does the success of your earthly projects and undertakings depend? Does it not depend entirely upon Him who is the great source of every blessing, temporal as well as eter-

nal? "For neither is he who planteth any thing," says St. Paul, "nor he who watereth, but God who giveth the increase." And should not gratitude for past favors, which you manifest to him by a faithful discharge of your religious duties, be regarded as a means of obtaining a fresh supply from his all-bountiful hands? But allowing the advancement of your temporal interests to be by no means a certain and necessary result of your strict performance of the duties of religion, (since prosperity, which, in his anger, God grants to the wicked, he frequently, in his mercy, denies to the virtuous,) yet you will derive from it an advantage of superior excellence. And what is that? Why it is the advantage of a resigned and submissive mind, of a mind conformable in all things to the holy will of God,—of a mind content, like that of holy Job, to receive evil as well as good things from the same divine hand; satisfied, whatever your portion may be, that it has been graciously assigned to you by infinite wisdom, acting under the influence of infinite goodness; and that, however distasteful or bitter it may be, it will eventually terminate in the promotion of your happiness, if you counteract not yourself its beneficial tendency by your own perverseness. Consider, moreover, sinner, O unfortunate sinner, that your earthly employments, which, when suffered to banish religion from your thoughts, are so frivolous and nugatory, will, by their connection with it, be converted into matters of the highest

moment. For it is a property of religion, by stamping those employments with its august signature, to exalt their character, to enhance their value, to transform them into acts of religious homage, and consequently to render them subservient to your eternal interests. Thus, while you “labor for the meat which perisheth,” you will at the same time, in compliance with the recommendation of your blessed Saviour, “labour also for that which endureth to everlasting life.” (JOHN, *c.* 6.) Will you then, I ask, be so regardless of your best and dearest interests as to permit your solicitude for worldly things to deprive you of a source of such unspeakable advantages?

But an obstacle still more formidable may, I am aware, present itself to you to oppose your return to the path of duty,—and that is your unhappy attachment to a vicious course of life, into which your passions may possibly have seduced you. How difficult it is to conquer an attachment of this description, experience, it must be confessed, too lamentably proves. But the difficulty of the undertaking should not deter you from attempting to accomplish it. Are worldlings, in their pursuit of the transitory things of earth, discouraged by the difficulties which offer themselves to their view? And what are all the most valuable possessions which the earth affords compared with the salvation of your immortal soul? Will you then, for the sake of the transient indulgence of a disorderly appetite, forfeit an

eternity of boundless happiness ? And is not even that transient indulgence, which you so fondly cherish, productive of a degree of anguish greatly exceeding the pleasure which may accompany it ? Is not that low and ignoble pleasure a poor equivalent, moreover, for the humiliating sense of the degradation of your nature, the tumultuous perturbation of your disordered soul, and the galling pangs of remorse, to which it usually gives birth ? Think, on the other hand, on the inestimable blessings which will be the consequences of your return into the paths of righteousness. Your mind, which at present is so disturbed and uneasy, will become the seat of peace, of order, and serenity. Your thoughts will be calm, your affections regulated, your views exalted. The divine influence of the Spirit of God, who will reside in your soul as within his temple, will diffuse over it an unspeakable consolation, delight, and joy, which will be an ample compensation for the sacrifice you shall have made of your sinful gratifications, and for all the mortifications, restraints, or hardships, to which a life of virtue may possibly subject you. Devoid of all anxiety, vexation, or trouble, you will live beneath the smiles of approving Heaven contented and happy. And when the hour of your death shall at length arrive, you will hail it with exultation as the period of your introduction into a blissful immortality. Such, sinner, will be the happy fruits of your return from the ways of iniquity, into the paths of virtue. But

should these animating considerations fail to produce their intended effect, then listen to the threats of God's avenging justice.

Terrified by the sound of these announced denunciations of vengeance on unrepenting and irreclaimable sinners, and unwilling to hear them specifically detailed, I imagine I perceive the affrighted wanderer forcing, as it were, his way through the thickets in which he is engaged, through the thorns and brambles which obstruct his passage, till he reach at length that lofty summit of presumptuous confidence to which his fears direct him to have recourse for safety. Still, however, will I pursue thee, thou poor, deluded, wanderer, even to the utmost height of thy imagined security, and I will endeavour, if possible, to draw thee off from a situation so replete with danger. Know then, sinner, O thoughtless and deluded sinner (for thou art that poor wandering sheep I have just described, who, amidst the wounds inflicted on thee by the sharp thorns of thy keen remorse, repairest for security to the proud eminence of presumptuous confidence in the mercy of the Most High, to protect thee from the effects of his avenging justice) know, then, I say, sinner, that your expectations are vain. For God, though merciful, is likewise just; and, if to humbled and repentant sinners he exhibits himself in the character of an indulgent father, the form in which he presents himself, to the obstinate and perverse, is that of a stern and inexorable judge. "Knowest

thou not," says St. Paul, "that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But, according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man, according to his works." (ROM. c. ii. v. 4, 5, 6.)

But, oh! what a dismal, melancholy, scene do I now behold! Alas! the poor unhappy wanderer, dismayed by the dangers of his frightful situation, has precipitated himself headlong into the gulph of despondency. And there, there he lies, wretched and disconsolate, surrounded on all sides with impenetrable gloom. Yet, will I not forsake thee, my darling sheep; no, I will plunge after thee into the dark abyss, and endeavour to extricate thee from thy deplorable condition. Should such be thy state, O unfortunate sinner, should the apprehensions of the divine judgments, provoked by thy transgressions, have hurried thee down into the gulph of despondency, listen, O listen, I intreat thee, to the words of consolation, in which a God of mercy has authorized me to address thee. Say, then, thou unhappy child of dejection and wretchedness, why dost thou abandon thyself to the horrors of despair? Is it the number of thy crimes, or is it the enormity of them which has urged thee to so shocking and fatal an extremity? But, however numerous or enormous they may have been, has not the heart's blood of the world's Redeemer flowed plenteously for them all? If, in

the black catalogue of thy offences, there be one to which that precious lavatory has not been extended,—if there be amongst them so foul a blot, that the blood of the Lamb is utterly devoid of efficacy to efface it, then, indeed, but not till then, shall I be reluctantly compelled to acknowledge that thy case is desperate. But there is no such limitation to the extent of the application, or to the efficacy of the power of the blood of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, to warrant an idea so injurious to it. “For if any man sin,” says St. John, without any restriction whatsoever, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world.” (1 JOHN, c. ii. v. 1, 2.) Innumerable, moreover, are the passages in the sacred Scriptures, in which the boundless mercy of the Almighty, in behalf of repenting sinners, is exhibited to us in the most lively colors: and examples are also recorded, in the same inspired writings, of a variety of great and notorious sinners who have been the object of it. Such was David, the adulterer and murderer, to whom, on his repentance, his sins were pardoned. Such was Peter, the denier of his divine master, who, because he went out and wept bitterly, was restored to favor. Such was Paul, that bloody persecutor of the Christian name, who was converted by it into a vessel of election. Such was the penitent woman, mentioned in the Gospel,

to whom "many sins were forgiven, because she loved much." And such mayest thou be too, if thou wilt but recommend thyself to the same benignant mercy, in similar dispositions ;—if penetrated with sorrow for thy past offences, thou wilt humbly confess them, and prove by thy conduct the sincerity of thy repentance. Banish, then, from thy mind, that monstrous suggestion of diabolical fraud, which should pretend to fix limits to the mercy of the Most High ; which should dare to say to Omnipotence itself, thus far shalt thou go, and no farther, and beyond this boundary the arm of thy mercy shall not be extended. It is a mere stratagem of the enemy of thy soul, who, after having led thee on, by his delusive representations of God's indulgent mercy, into the broad road of perdition, by exaggerated representations of his avenging justice, equally delusive, now endeavours to cut off thy retreat, in order, thereby, to accomplish thy destruction. Listen not, therefore, to his infernal suggestion, but listen, rather, to the voice of God, speaking to thee by the mouth of his prophet ; "Be converted, and do penance, for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin ; cast away all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit ; and why will you die, O house of Israel ? For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, return ye and live." (EZECH. c. xviii. v. 30, 31, 32.) "Listen to the voice of Jesus himself, declaring to thee in the

Gospel of this Sunday, that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, than over ninety-nine just who need not penance." Encouraged by these consoling admonitions, return, O sinner, to the Lord thy God. Throw thyself, with confidence, into the arms of his mercy, and, like the shepherd in the parable, he will bear thee, as it were, upon his shoulders, by his supporting grace, till he convey thee at length in safety to the happy pastures of life eternal.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON TRUE HAPPINESS.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, v. v. 1-11. At that time, when the multitude pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth; and he saw two ships standing by the lake, but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets; and going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land; and sitting, he taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught; and Simon, answering, said to him, Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing, but at thy word I will let down the net; and when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net broke; and they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men; and having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed him.

THE miracles of our blessed Saviour, whilst they displayed to the world, in a most conspicuous manner, the greatness of his power, furnished him, occasionally, with analogous topics of instruction.

Of this description was the miracle related in the Gospel of this Sunday. St. Peter, who was by trade a fisherman, had been engaged, it appears, the whole night, with his companions, in a ship, on the lake of Genesareth, in the usual occupations of his calling, but without success. "They had labored," as he said to Jesus, "the whole night, and had taken nothing;" at the command, however, of his Divine Master, he once more cast for a draught, and, to his astonishment, the net was not only filled in a moment, it even broke with the weight; but their partners in a neighbouring ship hastened to their assistance, and so great was the multitude of fishes which had been caught, that both vessels were in some danger of sinking. From the astonishment expressed by Peter at so marvellous an event, Jesus took occasion to acquaint him with the still more wonderful success which should attend his exertions and those of his colleagues in their future occupations of fishing for the souls of men, when drawing them, as it were, up from the turbid pool of iniquity and error, by the net of the divine word, they should load with their multitude the vessel of his Church. "Fear not," says Jesus to St. Peter, "from henceforth you shall catch men." How completely this declaration of Christ has been verified, is an historical truth which scepticism itself must be compelled to acknowledge. For we read in the Acts, that when on the feast of Pentecost this same Peter began to exercise his profession of aposto-

lical fisherman, at the first cast of the net he made three thousand converts, and at the next not fewer than five thousand. And thus, according to the parable delivered by our blessed Saviour on another occasion, the kingdom of heaven, (by which is to be understood the Church of Christ,) “was like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kind of fishes.” (MATT. c. xiii. v. 47.) But the brilliant success, surprising as it unquestionably was, which attended this first attempt of the chief of the Apostles in his new employment, was only the prelude to that still more enlarged result of his succeeding exertions, and of those of his colleagues. For we learn from the same inspired volume to which I have already referred, that “the disciples multiplied exceedingly,” and that many even of the sacerdotal character were numbered among them. An additional augmentation was rapidly furnished by the various countries of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. Antioch quickly followed their example. From the distant shores of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and even from Rome, immense shoals of believers were seen to enter the Christian net. And, what is particularly remarkable, the conversion of unbelievers, in the last-mentioned countries, to the faith of Christ, was accomplished principally through the exertions of one who had been pre-eminently notorious for his hostility to the Christian name. Yes, Paul, that sanguinary persecutor of all who embraced the doctrine of the Gospel,

who is represented by St. Luke “as breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;” and who, in allusion to the circumstances of the miracle contained in this day’s Gospel, may be aptly compared to a ravenous shark, rushing furiously upon the defenceless fry that had entered the net, was himself taken captive in it; and, more wonderful still to relate, he was suddenly metamorphosed into a chief promoter of that very concern, which, with the utmost violence of fanatical rage and phrenzy, he had indefatigably laboured to oppose. Aided by the zeal and energy of this new convert to their cause, the fishermen of Galilee had the satisfaction to see their undertaking prosper to the full extent of their most sanguine expectations. But the prosecution of the work which the Apostles had so auspiciously begun, did not by any means terminate with their lives. No: it continued, after their death, to be conducted by their successors with unabated vigor, till, at the close of three centuries of uninterrupted opposition, it was completed by the conversion of the world to Christianity. But had these poor fishermen of Galilee acted from the sole impulse of their own minds, and depended upon their own efforts for the success of the work which they were prompted to undertake, what, think you, would have been the issue? Is it to be supposed that these mean and illiterate plebeians could, by the mere dint of their own exertions, have succeeded in spreading so

widely and so rapidly this new scheme of religious worship, the author of which had been condemned and executed in a most barbarous and ignominious manner, as the vilest of malefactors ; and which was replete with doctrines incomprehensible to human reason, and with a morality most hostile to the corrupt propensities of the human heart ; —and that they should have succeeded, too, in opposition to such a powerful combination of bigotry, superstition, prejudice, passion, sophistry, and violence, which were in arms against it ? The supposition is absurd. Like the Galilean fishermen on the lake of Genesareth, who laboured all the night yet took nothing, they would have experienced the inefficacy of their impotent attempt. Yet they did succeed. Nor could all the confederated forces arrayed against them obstruct their progress. The opposition which they met with served only to increase their ardor and to invigorate their exertions. Fatigued at length by continual failure, prejudice gradually melted away, passion ceased to rave, philosophy was silent, persecution sheathed its sword, and in the language of St. Paul, speaking generally, “ every knee was seen to bow, and every tongue was heard to confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.” But to what are we to attribute the unparalleled success which attended the labors of the planters and propagators of the Christian religion ? Why, to the self-same cause which rendered successful the labors of Peter on the lake

of Genesareth. For He who said to Peter, in the first instance, “launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught,” said also, in the second instance, to the Apostles and their successors, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.” (MATT. *c.* xxviii. *v.* 20.) They acted therefore in obedience to the command of their Divine Master, and hence the success which attended their labors. — Having said thus much upon a subject which has naturally arisen out of the text of the Gospel, I will now proceed to lay before you, for your instruction and edification, such other reflections as the consideration of this portion of the sacred Scripture has suggested to my mind.

Like the fishermen of Galilee on the lake of Genesareth, all mankind may be considered as throwing out their nets on the sea of life, in the hope of capturing that grand object of universal desire—happiness. That happiness they usually expect to derive from the possession of worldly honors, riches, or pleasures. But the expectations which they indulge will ever be found to be woefully disappointed,—and, like the Galilean fishermen, they will be ultimately constrained to confess, “that they have labored all night and have taken nothing.” For I will suppose, in the first

place, any one of these objects, or, if you please, all of them together united, to be in the possession of the same individual. He would not surely think himself a happy man if the instant he entered upon the enjoyment of them, they were to be snatched from him for ever,—if his honor were to be no more than a momentary flash,—if his riches were to be suddenly transferred to other hands,—and if the cup of pleasure were to be dashed from his lips as soon as he had begun to taste its sweets. He would surely deem such evanescent enjoyments to be sorry compensations for the labors which he had undergone in order to obtain them. Yet this single instant, when considered in proportion to the whole period of the most protracted life of man, is incalculably longer than is the whole period of the most protracted life of man in proportion to the boundless eternity of his being. Time, my friends, may be regarded as a rapid stream, which began to flow at the creation of the world,—the waters of which have now been rushing down with inconceivable impetuosity, during a series of almost six thousand years, into the vast ocean of eternity, and will continue to rush down with undiminished rapidity, till they shall have been all swallowed up in that unfathomable reservoir. Image to yourselves, my friends, the ambitious, the opulent, and the voluptuous of ancient times. Behold the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Cræsus, the Luculluses, all borne down by the irresistible torrent.

How rapid is their transition! Hardly do they present themselves to your view, when instantly they vanish: "I saw the impious man," says the Psalmist, "exalted like the cedars of Libanus,—and I passed by, and lo! he was not." Ages have now rolled away since their disappearance from the earth. Yet still they are. And how inconsiderable is the portion of their mortal lives, compared with that of their posthumous existence, even to the present moment! Yet still they live. Yes, great God! they live, and they will continue moreover to live as long as thou livest. But how small, how almost imperceptible a speck is the period of their earthly transit, even to the microscopic eye of the most vivid imagination, compared with thy everlasting duration! Yet this, comparatively speaking, is the entire measure of the duration of worldly enjoyments. And, can this be happiness?—this the whole amount of all that the accumulated possessions of the world are able to confer on its most favored votaries? Truly, it is but a transient meteor which blazes only for a moment and is extinguished for ever. It is a mere infinitesimal in the countless multitude of ages without number.

Thus far you must however have remarked, that I have considered the happiness of worldlings, (if so it must be called) in the most favorable point of view. I have considered it as the result of the collected assemblage of all the various objects of human desire concentrated in one and the same

individual. But is not this a chimerical supposition? For when did there exist a man to whom something or other was not wanting to complete his stock? Of those even who succeed in obtaining a large portion of these earthly goods, how small is the number compared with the multitude of those who do not! How many have there been, who, not content with the share which they already possessed, and who, laboring in consequence with incessant anxiety and unremitting industry to acquire more, have been known to reduce themselves to the most abject state of penury and wretchedness? Yet, supposing them to be successful to the utmost extent of their wishes in the accomplishment of their schemes of wealth, of aggrandisement, and of pleasure, how delusive is the satisfaction which the objects of their worldly enjoyment are capable of affording them! They may be pleased with them indeed at first, as children are with playthings as long as they are new to them. But the charms of novelty soon fade, and the toys of manhood, like those of infancy, cease to excite the same feelings of delight. It is not my intention to dwell at present on the numerous cares, vexations, and troubles, which are the usual companions of terrestrial possessions, because I hasten to offer to you a few reflections on the condition of those, who, like the fishermen of Galilee, letting down their net at the word of Christ, in obedience to the dictates of the same august personage, seek

first the kingdom of God and his justice in all their various occupations and pursuits. I shall now therefore close this part of my instruction with two striking passages extracted from writings of unequal authority indeed, yet both apposite to the present subject. The first is from the inspired text of the book of Ecclesiastes. "I have seen," said Solomon, "all things that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." (Eccl. c. i. v. 14.) The second is taken from the letters of a celebrated character, whose sentiments, in consideration of the experience which she had in the most splendid scenes of human life, must be allowed to be entitled to great respect. "Why cannot I," says Madame de Maintenon, in one of her letters, "why cannot I make over to you all my experience? Why cannot I unveil to you the ennui which devours the great, and their irksome toil to get through the day! Don't you see that I am dying with sorrow in the midst of a fortune scarcely to be imagined? I have been young and handsome,—I have tasted pleasures,—I have been loved wherever I have been. In a more advanced age I spent years in the midst of talent and wit.—I have reached the height of favor. And I protest to you that every state leaves a frightful void,—an uneasiness, a restless eagerness for something new, and which never satisfies."

Having shewn the inefficacy of the attempts of those to acquire real and substantial happiness,

who, in the nocturnal darkness spread over their minds, by their corrupt inclinations, seek it, exclusively, in the enjoyment of worldly possessions, and, who, like the fishermen of Galilee, may, therefore, be conceived to have labored all night, and to have taken nothing,—I will now, on the other hand, endeavour to make it appear, that they whose conduct is invariably ruled by a principle of obedience to the divine command, will infallibly obtain this grand object of their wishes, of which the multitude of fishes enclosed in the net, let down into the sea by the command of Jesus, is a lively representation. The perfection of human happiness is not, indeed, to be expected on this side the grave; but this, I maintain, and of this I am fully convinced, that the highest degree of happiness which man is capable of enjoying in his present state, is the result of a strict and undeviating compliance with the ordinances of God. “He,” says our blessed Saviour, “who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Is it possible for a man, whose mind is duly impressed with the truth and importance of this declaration, not to derive the greatest happiness of which his condition is susceptible, from acting, in all things, conformably to the will of God? What! he is assured, by truth itself, that the kingdom of heaven, that that kingdom, the possession of which implies the fruition of an endless eternity of unutterable delights, without pain or sorrow, shall be the reward of a con-

stant and persevering observance of the divine commands, which he is conscious to himself of endeavouring to practise, according to the measure of his limited powers, and shall he not feel happy in the contemplation of the promised recompense? Although the external circumstances of his condition should not be so comfortable as those of many others,—though pain, sickness, or distress, should be the portion of his inheritance here below,—yet they do not make him unhappy : no, but looking up to Jesus, that divine author and finisher of faith, who, in the words of the apostle, “ having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God,” (HEB. c. xii. v. 2)—and well knowing “ that his present tribulation, which is light and momentary, worketh for him above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory,” (2 COR. c. iv. v. 17) he experiences, even in his afflictions, a rich source of heartfelt satisfaction ; “ looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen,” he exults amidst his present sorrows, which are temporal, in the transporting prospect of his future joys, which he knows will be eternal. Those joys, too, those inconceivably great and unutterable joys, he accustoms himself to consider as at no great distance from him. He views them as in a manner within his reach, being separated from them by no wider interval than the narrow span of his mortal existence, which disappears amidst his contemplations of the end-

less duration of eternity ! What do I say ? He possesses, even at present, a partial anticipation of the exalted blessings of God's celestial kingdom, for, to use the words of our blessed Saviour, "the kingdom of God is within him." Yes, the kingdom of God is already within him, he feels within him that happy state of subordination and of peace, which are the sure consequences of the divine government. His passions are subdued, his affections regulated, his will is rectified and all the faculties of his mind and heart are subservient to the end for which they were created. As a "fellow-citizen with the saints, and a domestic of God," he is admitted to all the privileges of the eternal city, which are compatible with his present probationary habitation. He is indulged in a free and delightful intercourse with the supreme object of his affections, whose delight it is, by abundant communications of his celestial influences, to testify to him his boundless love. He feels with the Psalmist "his observance of the commandments of the Lord to be its own reward ;" like him, he acknowledges them to be far "more desirable than gold or precious stones, to be sweeter far to his palate than honey or the honey comb." (PSALM xviii.) And thus the poor exiled offspring of Eve becomes, in some measure, even during his banishment, an associate with the saints in bliss. What think you of this, my friends ? Is not this happiness ? Can worldlings produce anything to be compared with this ? This happiness,

however, is what the faithful observers of the commandments of God do actually enjoy, and this happiness, my friends, may be yours ; yes, it may be yours, whatever your situations in life may be, for God is not a respecter of persons ; high and low, rich and poor, the learned and the unlearned, are alike objects of his providential care. If, then, resisting the importunities of corrupt nature, you labor assiduously, diligently, and conscientiously, in the discharge of the duties of your respective callings, from an elevated principle of obedience to the commands of God, and study, in all things, to do his holy will, you may rest assured, that in conformity with the gracious promise of your divine Redeemer, you will receive, in return, a hundred fold, even in this world, and hereafter will be put in the possession of everlasting life. (MATT. c. xix. v. 29.)

SERMON XXIX.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PASSION OF ANGER.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, v. v. 20-24. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, Except your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift.

THE portion of Scripture selected by the Church for the Gospel of this Sunday, is a part of that truly admirable discourse which is recorded to have been delivered by our Blessed Saviour on the mount. In it he, in the first place, informs his disciples, that unless their righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees, they are not to flatter themselves with the expectation of being admitted hereafter into his heavenly kingdom: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." One great defect in the righteousness

of the Pharisees appears to have been this; that they made it to consist in a strict observance of the dead letter of the law, without any regard to its animating spirit. They attended solely to the overt acts which the words of the law either enjoined or prohibited, heedless of the inward dispositions of mind in which those acts might originate. This defective system of morality our blessed Saviour proceeds to exemplify, in the construction which the Pharisees were accustomed to put on the words of the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." "You have heard," says he, "that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment;" intimating to them, by this observation, that they only who actually imbrued their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature were numbered by them among the violators of that commandment. This literal and confined interpretation of the law of Moses, he, in the next place, condemns in the most emphatic terms, with all the authority of a Divine Legislator; for he adds, "but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." The meaning of which words is, that not only the man who plunges a dagger into the heart of a fellow-creature, but he who, by anger, cherishes the deadly weapon in his bosom,

or who, by the use of contemptuous and outrageous language, brandishes it, as it were, with his tongue, —is guilty also of an infringement of the law, in the degrees specified by certain judicial proceedings prevailing among the Jews, on which it is not necessary for me at present to dwell, but which are expressed by the terms, judgment, council, and gehenna of fire. Finally, he prescribes the rule to be observed by those who have cause to reproach themselves with a violation of the law, in any of these respects; and that rule is, reparation to the injured party for the offence which they may have given. The observance of that rule he moreover pronounces to be of such indispensable obligation, as to claim precedence of the most sacred duties of religion. “Therefore,” he concludes, “if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and thou shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift.”

Such, my friends, I verily believe to be the real import of this day’s Gospel; and which cannot, I think, fail to furnish me with abundant matter of useful instruction. The first object of the condemnation of our Blessed Saviour, as an infraction of the fifth commandment, is the indulgence of anger. “But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment.” With what propriety anger is here declared by the great law-giver of the Chris-

tian dispensation, to be a violation of the fifth commandment, must be evident to all who reflect seriously on its sanguinary tendency and murderous effects. "Whence are wars and contentions among you?" says St. James, "Come they not hence? From your concupiscences which war in your members?" (JAMES, *c.* iv. *v.* 4.) Anger, my friends, is one of these concupiscences—and well may it be said to *war* in the members of those who harbour it. For it is utterly destructive of their *peace* of mind. It generates disorder—is productive of internal tumult—lays waste their comforts, and poisons every spring of satisfaction within them. Neither time nor place can protect them from the baleful effects of its hostility. It haunts them constantly both by day and by night. It pursues them into company—follows them into their retreats, diffusing everywhere around them a horrid gloom—darkening every object on which they cast their eyes, and embittering every pleasure which it is given to them to taste.

Nor is the war which it wages confined exclusively to the breasts of those who give it admittance; no, it sometimes bursts forth with all the fury of a hurricane, and commits, in its course, the most extensive and dreadful ravages. Numerous are the examples which, without travelling out of the sacred Scriptures, I have it in my power to produce, of the fatal consequences of this atrocious passion. Anger caused the perpetration of the first murder that stained the annals of the

world, and that by the hand of a brother. "And Cain," says the book of Genesis, "was exceedingly *angry*, and his countenance fell, and Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him." (GEN. c. iv.) Anger urged Esau to a similar attempt on the life of Jacob. Anger stimulated the sons of Jacob to avenge the insult which a single individual had offered to their sister, in the city of Sichem, by the promiscuous ruin and destruction of its inhabitants. "And hearing what had passed," says the sacred text, "they were exceedingly *angry*; and two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dina, taking their swords, entered boldly into the city, and slew all the men. And when they were gone out, the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, in revenge of the rape. And they took their sheep, and their herds, and their asses, wasting all they had in their houses, and in the fields. And their children and wives they took captive." (GEN. c. xxxiv.) Anger would have impelled David to a most unwarrantable deed of blood and depredation, had not the seasonable intervention of the wife of the man who had provoked his indignation, averted his avenging arm. "And David said to Abigail, blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech: and blessed be thou who hast kept me to day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand, otherwise, as the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, who hath withholden me from doing

any evil, if thou hadst not quickly come to meet me, there had not been left even a dog to Nabal, by the morning light." (1 KINGS, c. xxv. v. 32, 33, 34.) Anger instigated Aman, the most distinguished favourite of King Assuerus, to the formation of the diabolical design of extirpating from the Persian dominions the whole Jewish race, without any distinction of age, sex, or condition, only because a single individual of that unfortunate people, had refused to pay him the homage which his conscience condemned. "Now, when Aman," says the book of Esther, "had heard this, and had proved, by experience, that Mardochai did not bend his knee to him, nor worship him, he was exceedingly *angry*; and he counted it as nothing to lay hands upon Mardochai alone, for he had heard that he was of the nation of the Jews that were in the kingdom of Assuerus." (ESTHER, c. iii. v. 5, 6.) And his barbarous project would have been actually carried into effect, had it not been defeated by the superior influence which Esther afterwards acquired at the court of the Persian monarch. Anger, excited by the disgraceful flight to which he had been put by the people of Persepolis, caused the Syrian despot, Antiochus Epiphanes, to mount the chariot of his fury, and to hasten precipitately, with the utmost expedition, to discharge his vengeance on Jerusalem and its inhabitants, when he was suddenly arrested, in his mad career, by the hand of heaven. "And swelling with *anger*," says the second book of Macchabees, "he

thought to revenge upon the Jews the injury done by them that had put him to flight. And therefore he commanded his chariot to be driven without stopping on his journey. But the Lord, the God of Israel, that seeth all things, struck him with an incurable and invisible plague." (2 Macc. c. ix. v. 4, 5.)

If, from the hallowed ground of holy writ, I were to make an excursion into the blood-stained territories of profane history, what scenes of carnage, of desolation, and of horror, in which anger has been the principal actress, should I not have to disclose to your view? "Should you be willing," says Seneca, in a treatise which he has written upon the subject, "should you be willing to consider the effects and mischiefs of anger, you would find that no pestilence has been more pernicious to the human race. "Behold," says that eloquent philosopher, "the foundations of the noblest cities, scarcely now discernible; these *anger* has overthrown. Behold solitudes extending many miles without a habitation—these *anger* has drained. Behold," but here I must stop, for there would be no end to my remarks on the direful effects of this furious passion. Were I to lay before you all the observations which moralists have made on its destructive ravages, or all the instances by which historians have exemplified them.

It will be observed, perhaps, that the instances which I have adduced, of the fatal consequences of

anger, are all of an extraordinary description, and that they are then only seen to take place when the passion rages with uncommon violence. True. But if not checked at an early period, that violence will be its unavoidable result. The torrent which sweeps away, in its desolating course, the flocks, and herds, and hopes of the husbandman, has its origin in a source of no very formidable aspect. "Restrain thy rage," says the Roman satirist, "which, unless it obey, commands." Do we not daily behold, even in ordinary life, the deplorable effects of this disastrous passion? Are not the most deadly feuds, animosities, and contentions, which destroy the comforts and harmony of society, the deleterious fruits of this most noxious plant? Do not the public prints furnish us frequently with melancholy accounts of the shocking catastrophes which anger has occasioned? Are not the sword and the pistol the weapons with which it arms the agents of its fury? Even among the labouring classes in society, have we not too often occasion to deplore its baneful consequences? Do we not see those whose interest one would imagine it should be, in compliance with the recommendation of the apostle, to bear each other's burdens, impelled by anger to increase and aggravate them? Instead of endeavouring, by kind offices of mutual accommodation and good fellowship, to smooth the common asperities of their condition, instead of infusing into their cup of affliction each his due proportion of the milk of

human kindness, or of the still more delicious cream of Christian charity ; instead of assuaging the pains which distress may have afflicted, by the soothing anodynes of tenderness and compassion, they study, alas ! too frequently, in their anger, to augment, reciprocally, each other's troubles, by a variety of disoblighing and vexatious contrivances, and embitter, mutually, with their spleen, the very bread which they eat, and which they so hardly earn with the sweat of their brow. These things, my friends, should not be ; not only are they violations of the fifth commandment, but they are violations of the whole code of the commandments. " For all the law," says St. Paul, " is fulfilled in one word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." " But if," continues the same apostle, " you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one by another." (GAL. c. v. v. 14, 15.) No, these things should not be, but as these things proceed from anger, how cautious should you be to exclude it from your hearts.

And why would you cherish in your bosom so pernicious a passion ? Are its emotions so very pleasing as to endear it to the heart of the person who indulges it ? Look at the man who is agitated by it ! Contemplate the features of his disordered countenance ! Remark the wild contortions of his frame ! Behold his eyes sparkling with fury,—his pale and quivering lips,—the alternate changes of color which mark his cheeks, now white as the

summit of a burning mountain, covered with snow, —now red as the summit of the same mountain, involved in flames, at the period of a volcanic eruption? Are these indications of very pleasing emotions in the breasts of those who harbour it? Are they not, on the contrary, demonstrative proofs of the inward trouble which it causes him to endure? But why refer you to external appearances, which in its violent paroxysms anger produces in the bosoms of those whose bosoms it inflames? I appeal to yourselves, if, when in any considerable degree, you have allowed your breasts to be agitated by it, the feelings to which it has given birth have not been the very reverse of pleasing? You know, perfectly well, that far from affording you any satisfaction, they are bitter sources of disquietude and trouble. You know, as well as I do, that they banish cheerfulness, beget gloom, occasion fretfulness, and make you at once dissatisfied with yourselves, and with all around you. Why then, I ask you once more, would you rashly abandon yourselves to the fury of a passion, which you are sensible, from experience, to be so pernicious in its influence? Is it because something, perhaps, may have been either said or done, which has given you offence? But either the words or actions which have given you offence, originated in a hostile and malevolent disposition on the part of the person from whom they proceeded, or they did not. If they did, then are you, yourselves, accomplices with your adversary, in promoting the

success of his malicious design, since by suffering yourselves to be provoked by them to anger, you enable him to attain the very object which he had in view. And if, on the other hand, they did not originate in a hostile and malevolent disposition, on the part of the person from whom they proceeded, then do you foolishly permit yourselves to be disturbed by the airy phantoms of your own imaginations. Even a look, a gesture, an unguarded expression, are apt, sometimes, to be interpreted into studied marks of contempt or insult, and as such to kindle the flames of anger. But, surely, my friends, charity, that kind, patient, and lovely virtue, which is described so beautifully by the apostle Paul, in the thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, “as not provoked to *anger*, thinking no evil, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things,” and by which every Christian professes, at least, to be animated, should prevent you from construing the possible, and not improbable, effects of inadvertency, into indications of malice. A mere difference of opinion, on a variety of subjects, important or unimportant, is known also, at other times, to excite a ferment in the feelings. If the topics in question be unimportant, I need not undertake to shew, how inconsistent it is with the dictates of good sense to suffer the peace of your minds to be disturbed by any opposition of sentiments upon them : and even if they be important, I contend that to yield to the irritations of anger, on account of opinions

delivered concerning them, which may not altogether coincide with your own, is as unjustifiable in itself, as it is injurious in its consequences. For, surely, your opponent has as good a right to maintain his notions on the point in dispute, as you have to maintain yours. If you conceive his notions to be erroneous, endeavour, by cool and dispassionate argumentation, to convince him that they are so. But do not attempt, by noisy vociferations of anger, to bully the understanding into a surrender of its principles. Instead of serving, you injure, on the contrary, the cause which you advocate, by this unreasonable mode of proceeding, for you deprive yourselves of the benefit of that calm attention, and self-possession, which are so favorable to the investigation and exposition of truth. You alienate the mind of your adversary, and induce him to draw, from the strength of your passion, an argument of your consciousness of the weakness of your cause. Since it is then only that in such contests men generally have recourse to the lawless arms of anger, either for attack, or defence, when the armoury of reason is found to be exhausted. These reflections, my friends, I recommend particularly to your attention, should you chance to be engaged in religious controversies, for I am of opinion, that if they be duly impressed upon your minds, they will contribute, at least in some degree, to operate as preservatives from that intemperate warmth, against which the most zealous champions of orthodoxy are not

always sufficiently upon their guard, and which, sometimes, causes them to lose sight, not only of the rules of decorum, and of the respect due to their own character, as well as that of their neighbour, but of the positive prohibition of that very religion which they undertake to defend. For not content with combating the doctrines, they assail, in their anger, the persons of their opponents, with scurrility and abuse, and thus unthinkingly expose themselves to the danger announced by our blessed Saviour, to similar offenders in the Gospel of this Sunday. "And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council, and whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." "Let no evil speech then," my friends, as St. Paul admonishes, "proceed from your mouths. Let all bitterness, and anger, and clamor, and blasphemy, be put away from you with all malice." (EPH. c. iv. v. 29. 31.) And imitate the meekness which by word and example has been exhibited to you in such lovely colors, by the blessed Jesus, your teacher and your pattern, "who, when he was reviled," says St. Peter, "did not revile, when he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly." (1 PET. c. ii. v. 23.)

Should you, however, my friends, be conscious of having offended your neighbour in any respect, remember what your Divine Saviour commands you to do, at the close of this day's Gospel. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift before the altar,

and shalt there remember that thy brother has any thing against thee, go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Vain, therefore, my friends, you may be assured, will be your exercises of devotion,—vain your most earnest and fervent supplications,—vain the profusion of your most abundant alms, by which you may wish to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, if your hearts reproach you with the guilt of an undischarged debt of reparation to your injured brother, for, like the property of a man upon whom his creditor has a legal demand, they will be stopped in their ascent to their place of destination, and avail you nothing. But if, on the other hand, in compliance with the injunction of your Divine Saviour, in this day's Gospel, you be careful to liquidate, by a just compensation, the debt you may have contracted to your offended neighbour, then will every obstruction to the ascent of your good deeds on high be completely removed,—then, like the prayers and alms of the centurion, mentioned by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, "they will mount up for a memorial in the sight of God," and being placed to your account in the bank of heaven, they will produce for you hereafter an abundant interest.

SERMON XXX.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDE IN THE
DESERT.

GOSPEL, *St. Mark*, viii. v. 1-9. At that time, when there was a great multitude, and had nothing to eat, calling his disciples together, he saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off. And his disciples answered him, From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? who said, seven. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks he broke, and gave to his disciples to set before them, and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and he blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets; and they that had eaten were about four thousand, and he sent them away.

IN the Gospel of this Sunday, is exhibited to us an admirable instance of the compassion, of the goodness, and of the power of our Divine Redeemer, conspicuously displayed for the benefit of mankind. Of his compassion, excited by the wants of the multitude destitute of food; of his goodness, suggesting the benevolent design of relieving those wants; and of his power, exerted by a stupendous miracle, in the accomplishment of that humane and charitable design. "I have com-

passion on the multitude," said Jesus to his disciples. And why hadst thou compassion on the multitude, thou tender and commiserating friend of man? Oh! it was because they had been with thee three days and had nothing to eat. And thy feelings would not suffer thee to behold with insensibility the distress to which they were reduced by their zeal and assiduity in waiting upon thee, and listening to thy divine instructions. But how was so vast a concourse of people as was here assembled, to be provided with food sufficient for them all? Seven loaves and a few small fishes were the whole stock of provisions which the wilderness afforded: and how inadequate was this to satisfy the hungry appetites of so great a number of persons! Still thou couldst not find it in thine heart to send them away fasting to their homes, lest they should faint in the way, particularly as some of them came from afar off. What, then, was to be done? The ordinary resources of nature had, in a manner, failed: nor were there any means at hand of procuring a fresh supply. For whence, as thine own disciples observed, could any one satisfy them there with bread in the wilderness? Yet, oh! ineffable condescension! the exertions of thy goodness in behalf of indigent and distressed humanity, were not to be cramped by the restrictions of nature. Thou hadst recourse to thine Omnipotence to furnish thee with a field commensurate to thy bounty: and soon was the barren

desert, O thou benevolent Shepherd, transformed into a fertile pasture, furnishing thy poor famished sheep with an abundant supply of wholesome nourishment.

Fix then, my friends, fix stedfastly your eyes on the blessed Jesus, in act to evince, by a miraculous display of power, the immensity of his goodness to the children of men. Hear him order the promiscuous multitude to take their seats on the ground on which they stood. See him take his seven loaves and his few fishes, to divide them for the support of four thousand hungry individuals. Behold him raising his pious eyes to heaven, and invoking its blessing on the homely yet plentiful meal which he was about to set before them. It is finished, my friends. The work is done. And the seven loaves and the few little fishes are now become an abundant provision for the whole of that immense crowd of hungry guests, surrounding the table which "the Lord hath graciously laid for them in the wilderness." Yes, my friends, they all partake of the profuse repast, and the hunger of all is completely appeased. "They did eat," says the sacred text, "and were filled." Nor is that all: for such was the quantity of food which these seven loaves and few little fishes produced, that the remaining fragments which were afterwards collected, were sufficient to fill seven baskets.

You contemplate, no doubt, my friends, with

astonishment, mixed with admiration and delight, the wonderful effects of the power and goodness of your Divine Redeemer, manifested so conspicuously in the miracle recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday. Yet you yourselves are in the habit of witnessing the same miracle performed, and that too on a much larger scale, every day of your lives. For is it not a much greater miracle that the Lord should marvellously support *every day the whole human race* in the manner which he does, than that he should feed *on one particular occasion four thousand persons* with seven loaves and a few fishes? What are four thousand persons compared with those millions of human beings who are daily fed by his providential care? And are not the numerous grains of corn which issue from a single seed deposited in the earth a more wonderful multiplication than that of the seven loaves in the wilderness? Are not those innumerable shoals of fishes with which the waters abound, and which are the offspring of individuals of their respective species, instances of an increase still more astonishing than that of the few little fishes? And are not these wonderful results produced, moreover, by the same Almighty power which multiplied the loaves and fishes in the desert? Are they not the effect of the Divine word of the same Omnipotent Being, who, as we learn from the book of Genesis, issued in the beginning his command to the earth, “to bring forth the green herb, and such as might seed, and

the fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind, which might have seed in itself upon the earth ; and who said to the inhabitants of the waters, increase and multiply, and fill ye the waters of the sea." Surrounded then, my friends, as you constantly are, with the wonderful manifestations of the power and goodness of that same Omnipotent Being who nourished the hungry multitude in the wilderness, beholding them as you do, and partaking daily of their beneficial effects, can you refuse to offer to him your grateful tributes of adoration, gratitude, and love? Is not the discharge of this sacred duty particularly incumbent upon you, when you sit down to your meals, when, in every morsel of bread which you eat, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves in the wilderness is actually renewed? But are you never forgetful on these occasions to perform this solemn and pious act? Are you careful, in imitation of your Divine Saviour, who did not suffer the bread to be distributed among the multitude till he had given thanks to his Eternal Father ; are you careful, I say, not to begin your repasts till, in imitation of him, you have raised up your grateful hearts to Heaven, and invoked its blessing on the free gifts of that providential bounty with which your tables are spread? Do you partake of them with gratitude, as the Apostle recommends ; (1 COR. c. x. v. 30.) and having partaken of them, do you express your acknowledgments to the great Donor, from whose munificent hands they have been received?

Remember, also, my friends, that the ample provisions with which the Lord in his goodness has so graciously furnished you for your nourishment and support, were never intended to be applied to the purposes of intemperate gratification; that you are admonished by the Apostle "to be temperate in all things," and "to make your moderation known unto all men;" that to render them subservient to the promotion of excess, is to insult the Giver, whilst you are in the very act of partaking of his gifts, and to convert his blessings into instruments of offending him. "There was a certain rich man," says our blessed Saviour, in the parable recorded by St. Luke, "who had a steward." (LUKE, c. xvi.) Let me suppose that rich man to have authorised his steward to use in moderation every article of sustenance and refreshment which his house might afford; and that the latter, availing himself of the indulgence of his employer, eat and drank to such extravagant excess, as not only to disqualify himself for doing the duties annexed to his situation, but to pollute the very apartments in which it was his master's particular delight to reside, with the fruits of his intemperance. Do you not imagine that his master would be highly indignant at such base and disgusting conduct; and discharge him immediately from his service? God, my friends, is here intended to be represented by the rich man. Thou, intemperate rioter on the fruits of his beneficence, art the beastly steward;

and thy soul is the habitation in which thy Divine Master particularly delights to dwell. That Master—that kind, indulgent, and liberal Master—has graciously permitted thee to participate with moderation in the provisions and comforts with which the earth, his house, is so plentifully stocked ; but thou, whilst by thine intemperance thou abusest his beneficence, renderest thyself unfit for the occupations of thy calling, and defilest thy soul, that chosen residence, and consecrated sanctuary of his Holy Spirit, with thy criminal pollutions. “ Know you not,” says St. Paul, “ that you are the temple of God ; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” (1 COR. c. iii. v. 16. 17.) What then do I say, may be expected to be the result of the shameful abuse of the blessings which thy Heavenly Father has allowed thee to enjoy ? Do I say that he will certainly deprive thee of thy stewardship, by taking from thee thy earthly possessions ? No, I do not positively assert that ; though in that result thine intemperate dissipation may possibly terminate. But this I say, (and I am authorised by thy Heavenly Master to say it) that if thou do not repent, and reform thy conduct, but continue (to use his own words) “ to eat and drink with drunkards,” he will unquestionably deliver thee over to the ministers of his vengeance ; and that to them he will say, “ Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into exterior darkness, there

shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Be careful, therefore, my friends, whilst devout acts of supplication and thanksgiving precede and close your ordinary repasts, that temperance accompany your enjoyment of them.

It appears from the words of our blessed Saviour to his disciples, as recorded in the Gospel, that the multitude, in whose behalf he performed the astonishing miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, had been with him three days; and that it was the circumstance of their distress having been brought upon them by the assiduity of their attendance upon *him* which rendered them particularly the objects of his compassion, and of his subsequent beneficence. "I have compassion," said he, "on the multitude, for, behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat." Yes, indeed, my friends, the blessed Jesus was too tender-hearted, he was too kind and benevolent, to be insensible to the wants of persons in such circumstances, and to be inattentive to their relief. And hence, you may rest assured, that, generally speaking, he will not suffer your temporal concerns to be injured by your diligence in his service; and that, should he at any time allow you to experience inconvenience, to sustain loss, or to be afflicted with calamities of a more painful description, for his name's sake, it will always be with a view to the promotion of some greater interest. What then do I say? Do I say that, like the multitude in the barren

wilderness, you are to leave your homes, your families, and occupations, in order to devote yourselves to exercises of piety, and religious instruction? I say no such thing, my friends. The multitude in the wilderness had their religion yet to learn. They were not yet instructed in the saving truths of the Gospel; and therefore they did right in abandoning every earthly concern in order to procure the invaluable pearl of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But you, my friends, are not in this predicament. You possess already that inestimable pearl. You are already acquainted with the words of eternal life: and all that it remains for you to do, is to comply with their injunctions. These injunctions do not require you to relinquish your worldly employments, and to spend the whole of your time in devotional exercises. They do not tell you, that it is by being constantly on your knees, and in that attitude of supplication exclaiming for ever, Lord, Lord, that you will procure admittance into God's everlasting kingdom. They say, on the contrary, that "not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but that he who doeth the will of our Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." True, indeed, it is, that devotional exercises constitute a part of the duties comprised in the accomplishment of the will of our Father who is in heaven. They should open and consecrate, with their early tributes of religious homage to the great Author and Ruler of

the universe, the various occupations of each succeeding day; and should crown, with acts of thanksgiving to the same Almighty Being, the termination of them. The Sabbath, in particular, should in an especial manner be devoted to them. But surely it will not be contended that the daily devotion of such inconsiderable portions of your time to the service of Him upon whom the success of your undertakings depends, or that the periodical respite of one day in seven from your ordinary business, to be similarly employed, will be any detriment to your earthly concerns. By far the greatest part, however, of the duties which religion imposes upon you, are either directly connected with your usual employments, or they do not, at least, occasion any interruption of them. They consist in an upright, conscientious, and diligent discharge of the obligations of your respective callings,—in guarding with circumspection the avenues of your minds against the intrusion of unbecoming thoughts,—in duly regulating the affections of your hearts,—in laying a restraint on your vicious inclinations,—in preventing your senses from transgressing their prescribed boundaries, and wandering into the forbidden territories of criminal indulgence,—in preserving your eyes from the inspection of improper objects, your ears from listening to, and your tongues from uttering, profane, loose, or uncharitable language,—in cautiously refraining from all acts of injustice, from violence and intemperance of every descrip-

tion,—and in a meek, friendly, conciliating, and benevolent disposition to all mankind. Will any one say, that by imitating in this manner the attendance of the multitude in the wilderness on the Saviour of the world, you will do an injury to your temporal interests? I maintain, on the contrary, that you will contribute thereby most essentially to promote them. For does not the advancement of your temporal interests in great measure depend on habits of honest industry, sobriety, and the good-will of men? And are not these the natural effects of waiting upon the Lord in the manner which I have described? So true it is, that, as St. Paul observes, “godliness (properly understood) is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1 TIM. c. iv. v. 8.)

“Delight in the Lord,” then, my friends, as the Psalmist exhorts, “and he will give you the requests of your hearts.” “Commit your way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it.” “Envy not on the contrary the man who prospereth in his way, the man who doeth unjust things.” (Ps. xxxvi.) Envy him, indeed! He is by no means an object of envy. He is an object of pity. Compare his condition with that of the humble cottager, who, like Zachary and Elizabeth, walks constantly in the commandments of the Lord without blame. The former, it is true, has a magnificent dwelling decorated with whatever is most sumptuous and splendid. But within the walls of that magnificent

dwelling what irksomeness and dissatisfaction are often known to reside ! The latter inhabits a straw-thatched cottage meanly furnished ; yet beneath its humble roof content is his constant and inseparable companion. “ And godliness with contentment,” as the Apostle remarks, “ is great gain.” The former is clad in costly apparel, but it often covers a body diseased and languid. The garments of the latter are coarse and homely, yet they clothe a frame which is healthy and vigorous. The table of the former is spread with viands of choicest delicacy. But habit has deprived them of the power of giving pleasure to his vitiated palate. The meal of the latter is plain and simple ; but he sits down to it with a good appetite, and hunger imparts to it a never-failing zest. The former is not fatigued by laborious occupations ; but the greatest fatigue of all is that which he experiences from the dismal tedium of not knowing what to do. The latter toils the live-long day, yet cheerfulness ever accompanies his labours, and exhilarates his spirits. The former with much care composes himself to rest on his couch of down,—but will sleep come to him in obedience to his call ? The latter throws himself heedlessly on his bed of straw, and sleeps from night till morn without interruption or disturbance. The former anticipates, at no very distant period, the termination of all his enjoyments, such as they are, in the horrors of the tomb. The latter looks forward with consolation and delight to the hour

of his dissolution, as the commencement of an eternal and unutterable felicity. Permit one now to ask you, my friends, to which of these two conditions you are disposed to give the preference? To this question I am convinced that already your feelings have secretly made a reply: and I am greatly mistaken, indeed, if those feelings be not in perfect unison with my own, whilst from my heart I declare, that were there no choice left me but that of one or the other of these two conditions, I would not hesitate a moment to turn my back upon the gorgeous palace, with its guilty luxuries and its splendid crimes, and to enter the lowly cottage, there to eat my bread with contentment and innocence, and to cheer myself with the hope of a blissful immortality.

Before I bring this instruction to a close, I must solicit your attention a few moments, whilst I say a few words on a circumstance mentioned in the Gospel, to which I have not yet adverted. I mean the careful collection of the fragments. "And they took up that which was left of the fragments seven baskets," says the sacred text. From this circumstance of the collection of fragments, you may learn, my friends, a lesson of economy. For by it you are taught, that if the goods which the Almighty has so munificently imparted to you for your refreshment and support are not to be abused by intemperate gratification, yet neither should they be wasted by improvident neglect. If the former is to be considered as a

shameful prostitution, the latter may be thought to imply, if not a downright contempt, an undue estimation, at least, of the blessings of Providence. Let me exhort you, therefore, my friends, not to allow any part either of your own or of your employer's substance to be lost or damaged through carelessness or inattention. Imitate in this respect the wise economy of nature, which, after it has fertilized the fields with its irrigating showers, causes them to pass into its subterranean reservoirs, thence to flow into the beds of rivers, and to be subservient to the various exigencies of man. To recapitulate, in short, in a few words, the whole substance of this day's instruction, be duly thankful to the Eternal Author of every blessing which you daily receive from his bountiful hands. Abuse not those blessings by your intemperance or neglect. Rely with confidence on his providential care. Testify to him your fidelity by a punctual observance of his divine commands. And not only will you experience during your mortal lives, as did the multitude in the wilderness, the supply of your wants, but you will be raised hereafter to that happy state of existence in which no wants will remain to be supplied.

SERMON XXXI.

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON FAITH AND PIETY.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, vii. v. 15-21. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

IN the Gospel of this Sunday, which, like that of the Sunday before last, forms a part of the admirable discourse of our blessed Saviour on the Mount, that divine Shepherd cautions his little flock against the intrusion of beasts of prey, which, presenting themselves in fleeces, similar to their own, might seek, under that disguise, to gain admittance into the fold, in order to devour the sheep. By this similitude does he characterize those false teachers, who, covered with the garb of affected sanctity, inculcate principles destructive to the immortal souls of their hearers. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing

of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." He then points out to them the means by which the imposture may be detected, and this he makes to consist in an attentive inspection of the doctrines which they deliver, (for in this sense he is to be understood, when he says, "by their fruits you shall know them,") intimating, at the same time, that as men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles, so neither will the religious principles of those false teachers be found, upon examination, to be sound and genuine; that as a tree is to be estimated from the quality of the fruit which it produces, so a judgment is to be formed of the character of a teacher, from the nature and tendency of the doctrines which he teaches. "Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit;" and as it is impossible for a tree that is radically good to be productive of bad fruit, or for a tree that is radically bad to be productive of good fruit, it may safely be concluded, that when the tenets which a teacher delivers, are repugnant to the doctrines of eternal truth, or injurious to the interests of morality, he is then to be classed in the number of false teachers; and that if he obstinately persist in the retention and promulgation of his erroneous and dissolute principles, all his external parade of sanctity will be productive of no other effect, than that of causing his portion to be ultimately appointed with the hypocrites, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (MATT. c. xxiv.

v. 51.) for “every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.” Finally, he adds, that piety alone, though founded on pure and genuine principles, is not sufficient to procure for its votaries the blessings of everlasting life, but that to it must be superadded an unrestricted compliance with the commands of God in every other respect. “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Such, my friends, I conceive to be a faithful exposition of the words of our blessed Saviour, contained in the Gospel of this Sunday, from which I am naturally led to make it appear, that piety, unaccompanied with sound principles of doctrine, is false and unavailing; and, in the next place, that when even it is accompanied with sound principles of doctrine, it is not *alone* sufficient for the attainment of everlasting happiness.

In the first place, then, I assert, that piety, unaccompanied with sound principles of doctrine, is false and unavailing. For what is to be understood by piety? Piety is the elevation of the soul to God, in a variety of acts of religious homage. The chief of those acts are adoration, thanksgiving, humiliation, and supplication. By these acts, we worship him with all the faculties of our minds and hearts, as the Sovereign Lord and Creator of the universe, uniting essentially in his

nature every possible perfection, unlimited and unalloyed. We express to him our gratitude for all the blessings of his boundless beneficence ; we acknowledge our entire dependence upon him for our being, and for whatever may contribute to its support and comfort ; and soliciting his forgiveness of our past transgressions of his holy law, we intreat him to impart to us such necessary graces and succours, as may be adequate to the various exigencies, spiritual or temporal, of our condition here below. But how can that man be thought to worship the One Supreme, in all the plenitude of his divine perfections, who, by rejecting any of the articles of faith which he has graciously condescended to reveal, calls in question the attribute of his veracity ? How can that man be duly thankful for the blessings of his beneficence, who, denying the reality of that diversity of spiritual blessings, which faith teaches to have been communicated by him to his Church, through the mediation of his beloved Son, must, on that account, be in some degree deficient in the just sense of God's unspeakable bounty which gratitude requires ? How can that man be thought to confess with sincerity of heart his entire dependence on the adorable Author of his existence, who, because some of the truths, which he has deigned to disclose, are incomprehensible to his weak and limited understanding, hesitates to subject it to the obedience of Christ ? Or how can that man be thought to present his petitions to the Eternal, in suitable

dispositions of mind, who, though he has been assured by truth itself, that “if he ask, he shall receive, if he seek he shall find, and if he knock, it shall be opened unto him,” must, nevertheless, from the general deficiency of his faith, be more or less distrustful of the fulfilment of those gracious promises?

Again, my friends, that piety may surely be considered as false and unavailing, which does not find acceptance with God. But no piety can find acceptance with God, which is not accompanied with sound principles of faith; for St. Paul assures us, in positive terms, that “without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Vain, then, my friends, will be all the diversified tributes of your devotional homage,—vain your acts of adoration, of thanksgiving, of humiliation and supplication,—if faith recommend them not to the gracious acceptance of that Almighty Being, who is the object of them. Of this, indeed, we have a remarkable instance, in the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis, in which we read, that “Cain offered of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord; that Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat: and that the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings, but that to Cain and his offerings he had no respect.” And why did God accept with complacency the oblations of Abel, and reject those of Cain? Were the simple fruits of the earth, presented by the latter, less acceptable to the Majesty of Heaven than the blood-

stained victims of his more fortunate brother? Can a God of mercy, of tenderness, and compassion, be thought to have a particular partiality for blood? Oh! no, my friends, there was another reason for the rejection of the sacrifice of the one, and the acceptance of that of the other; and that reason you will find specifically assigned by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, where he says (mark well his words, my friends, for they are particularly deserving of your attention), he says, that “by *faith* Abel offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain, by which he obtained a testimony that he was just, God giving testimony to his gifts.” Thus have we a most striking example exhibited to us, by the Scripture itself, of one solemn act of religious worship having been graciously accepted, and of another having been rejected by God, and that too for no other reason than because the former was, and the latter was not, recommended by faith: to which may be added the testimony of St. James, who asserts, in express terms, that petitions to the throne of mercy, if faith be wanting, will be unsuccessful in the attainment of the objects for which they are preferred. “If any of you want wisdom,” says that Apostle, “let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly; but let him ask in faith, not wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about with the wind; therefore, let not that man think that

he shall receive anything of the Lord." (JAM. c. i. v. 5, 6, 7.) What, in reality, would you think of the conduct of a man who should present himself before the throne of his Sovereign, clad in a distinctive habit of rebellion, and bearing in his hand a banner announcing, by devices inscribed upon it, his sentiments of disloyalty; and, in that accoutrement, and with that badge of avowed opposition to the royal authority displayed before him, should throw himself on his knees in the royal presence, should begin to sound forth praises of the prince, thank him for his numerous favors, protest solemnly the most entire submission to his decrees, and humbly imploring the pardon of past disloyalty, should solicit his future protection and favor? What, I ask you, would you think of the conduct of such an one? Would you not deem it to be in the highest degree insulting? And far from procuring in his behalf a favorable reception, or obtaining for him the objects of his petition, would it not have a tendency rather to provoke against him the indignation of his Sovereign, and to draw down upon him the severity of his justice? But is not the demeanor of that person perfectly similar, who, whilst he openly professes his opposition to any of God's revealed truths, presents himself before him in prostrate adoration, and offers him his tributes of religious homage? Remember, then, my friends, that if, in the language of St. Paul, you would "go with confidence to the throne of grace,

to obtain mercy, and to find grace in seasonable aid," your understandings must be captivated by faith to the obedience of Christ.

Yet let it not be imagined that piety alone, though it proceed from a heart over which faith exercises its due influence, is sufficient to secure to us the attainment of everlasting bliss. That occasional acts of piety to the Supreme Author and Supporter of our being, expressive of our feelings of adoration and gratitude towards Him, of our unreserved dependence upon him, and of our humble supplications for his protection and succour, are duties of indispensable obligation, must be so clear to every ingenuous mind, not only from the plainest dictates of divine revelation, but from the spontaneous impulse of human nature, that to undertake to prove it by an elaborate discussion may well be deemed an unnecessary task. To imagine, however, that the whole of our time was intended by the Eternal Author of our existence to be consecrated to exercises of this description, and that religion imposes no other duties upon us, is to entertain a very erroneous notion of the designs of the Most High, and very inadequate notions of the nature of religion. For were men to be constantly engaged in the performance of devotional exercises, the business of the world would be entirely at a stand. The fields would remain untilled, the arts neglected, the sciences uncultivated,—all the treasures of the divine beneficence with which the earth is

stocked, to supply the wants and to administer to the conveniences and comforts of human life, would be unemployed, and the world would resemble a vast machine furnished with an endless variety of materials on which its mechanism was intended to act, and composed of an immense diversity of parts, so constructed and connected with each other, as by their combined action to form from those materials a multiplicity of useful and ornamental articles for the use of man,—which, nevertheless, because not put in motion, would be nothing better in reality than a piece of useless lumber. Let then the early oblation of your devout affections ascend each day like incense to the throne of God. Let an evening sacrifice of a similar description be offered daily to the same Almighty Being. And let that day, which in an especial manner is denominated the Lord's day, be religiously sanctified by its appropriate exercises of piety. But remember, at the same time, that other duties, besides that of devotion, remain to be discharged, since our blessed Saviour has himself declared, in the Gospel of this day, that “not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but that he who doeth the will of his Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Now you cannot be thought to do the will of his heavenly Father, if you do not comply with the injunctions of his holy law. Numerous are the obligations which that law prescribes. Some there are which are

common to men in general ; and there are others which are peculiar to particular states and conditions. The obligations which are common to men in general, regard principally the mortification of the passions, the government of the temper, and the due regulation of external conduct. “ If you live according to the flesh,” says St. Paul, “ you shall die ; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.” (Rom. c. vi. v. 13.) If passions therefore of any description actuate your breasts,—if pride, vanity, covetousness, sensuality, or any other disorderly inclination, be suffered to rule your conduct, your devotional exercises, however frequent or ardent they may be, will not preserve you from that perdition which the Apostle so emphatically denounces against those who subject themselves to their influence. No : you must mortify those passions,—that is to say, you must put them as it were to death,—you must slay them without mercy, with the sword of the spirit, and establish on the ruins of their usurped power the legitimate dominion of the living God. To the mortification of the passions must also be added the government of the temper. “ With all watchfulness keep thy heart,” says the wise man,” because life issueth out from it.” (Prov. c. iv. v. 23.) As in the animal economy, the blood, passing from the heart into the arteries, and thence into the veins, is thus diffused over the whole body, imparting to it health and vigor,—but generating, if vitiated,

diseases and death,—so, in the economy of grace, the affections may be considered as the heart's blood of the soul, animating and invigorating it, if in a pure state, by its diffusive influence,—but, if tainted with the acrimonious humors of an ungoverned temper, debilitating, on the contrary, and destroying perhaps within it the divine principle of spiritual life.” Be careful, therefore, my friends, not to allow the affections of your hearts to be contaminated and soured by the morbid humors of an ill-regulated temper. Let no angry or uncharitable emotions disturb their serenity. Let no contemptuous thoughts, no censorious judgments, no peevish discontent, no fretful impatience, be suffered to pollute them; but let meekness, humility, candor, resignation, brotherly love, and every other sweetener of the affections, be fondly cherished and assiduously cultivated. From the mortification of the passions and government of the temper will naturally proceed that corresponding tenor of conduct which I stated to you to be the third obligation prescribed by the ordinances of God. For if your passions be kept under due restraint, and your tempers be duly regulated, then will the whole body of your actions be conformable to those sacred rules of sobriety and justice, which, united with piety, constitute the perfection of the Christian character, according to the definition which is given of it by St. Paul, when he says, “The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared unto all men, instructing

us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, justly, and piously in this world." (TIT. c. ii. v. 11, 12.) Then will intemperance be banished from your enjoyments, and injustice from your dealings. Then will your tongues be restrained from slander, and your hands from violence. Then will you be kind, gentle, and beneficent to all with whom you may be in any manner connected. Then, to use the words of St. Peter, "by doing well you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 PET. c. ii. v. 15.) Then, in short, in the language of our blessed Saviour, "you will make your light shine before men, who, seeing your good works, will glorify your Father who is in heaven."

But, besides the general duties, which, as Christians, it is incumbent upon you to discharge, there are also others which arise out of the particular states and relations of men in society, which religion requires its votaries diligently to perform. "As the Lord hath distributed to every one, so let him walk," says St. Paul; "and let every man wherein he was called, therein abide with God." Whatever, therefore, may be the business of your respective callings, you are to consider an assiduous and careful attention to it as a sacred obligation imposed upon you by the ordinance of God. With respect to those reciprocal duties, resulting from the relations which men bear to each other in society, they chiefly regard the relative conditions of sovereigns and subjects, of

husbands and wives, of parents and children, and of masters and servants : and as those duties are clearly, though summarily, expressed in the sacred Scripture, it will be sufficient for the present purpose to expose them to you in the words of inspiration, without any comment. “Be ye subject,” says St. Peter, “to every human creature for God’s sake, whether it be to the king as excelling, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of the good.” (1 PET. *c.* ii. *v.* 13, 14.) “Let women,” says St. Paul, “be subject to their husbands as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it.” (EPHES. *c.* v. *v.* 22, 25.) “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ : not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart with a good-will,—doing service to the Lord, and not to men : knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And you, masters, do the same thing to them, forbearing threatenings,—knowing that both the Lord of them and you is in heaven : and there is no respect of persons with him.”

(EPH. *c.* vi.) From this clear and unobjectionable exposition of the duties peculiar to the particular states and relative situations in which you may be placed, it appears that not only the offices attached to those states and relative situations are to be faithfully discharged, but that the motives of discharging them are also to be taken into consideration,—and that in the performance of them, the desire of obtaining the approbation of God, should be the actuating principle of your hearts. Be careful, therefore, my friends, whilst you fulfil with fidelity the various obligations of your respective callings, to act from the impulse of this exalted motive. Consider yourselves as servants of your great Master who is in heaven. Let the accomplishment of his divine will be the constant object of your occupations and pursuits. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 COR. *c.* x. *v.* 31.) Thus will your lives, whatever may be your rank or condition in the world, be devoted to his service: and at the termination of them you will have the satisfaction to be greeted with that cheering expression of His sovereign approbation: “Well done, good and faithful servant,—because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things, enter into the joy of your Lord.”

SERMON XXXII.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xvi. v. 1-9. At that time Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable, There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods: and he called him, and said to him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said, A hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him, take thy bill and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much dost thou owe? Who said, A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him, Take thy bill, and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you, Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

THE drift of the parable delivered by our blessed Saviour, which constitutes the whole of this day's Gospel, is to exhibit to us, in the first place, a striking representation of the ardor and sagacity

with which worldlings pursue their temporal interests ; to show, in the next place, the comparative indifference and inattention of Christians, in the promotion of their everlasting welfare ; and by the comparison between them, to stimulate, in the third place, the candidates for heaven to emulate the zealous and prudent exertions which mark the conduct of the votaries of earth. The steward of a certain rich man having been accused to his master of the mismanagement of his affairs, by dissipation or neglect, the latter communicates to him his positive determination to discharge him from his service. No sooner is he made acquainted with his master's design, than he immediately begins to consider what measures it may be advisable to adopt, with a view to his subsistence when he shall be out of employment. His former habits, or his age perhaps, will not allow him to have recourse to bodily labour : and to become a wretched dependant on the alms of the charitable is a humiliation to which his pride forbids him to submit. " To dig," says he, " I am not able,—to beg, I am ashamed." A scheme at length suggests itself to his mind, which he is determined to execute. In pursuance of this scheme, he calls together, according to the ordinary interpretation of the word, his master's debtors, and diminishes in their behalf the amount of their respective debts. His master being informed of the expedient to which he had resorted, applauds his sagacity. Such is clearly the substance of the parable

which our blessed Saviour closes with these remarkable words :—" For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." To which, moreover, he adds a recommendation to his followers to imitate the conduct of the steward in the parable, by making the perishable goods of earth subservient to the advancement of their eternal interests. " And I say to you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." This parable has sometimes been attacked by the enemies of Christianity, as containing a decided approbation of injustice,—but without reason. For, in the first place, the original Greek, Χειροφειλεξων which is usually translated *debtors*, whose debts the steward is represented to have diminished, will also bear the construction of tenants, whose rents he reduced. And to the latter supposition there may have been no injustice whatsoever, since the rents may possibly have been before too high. But without departing from the common interpretation, I maintain that there is not the slightest approbation of injustice ; for the parable states, that it was the *sagacity* of the steward, not his *fraud*, which was the object of his master's approbation. " And the lord recommended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done *wisely*." Thus, when an instance is sometimes produced of extraordinary abilities displayed by an unprincipled individual in any dishonest

transaction, it is not unusual to hear a person give him credit for his ingenuity. And surely you would not be so illiberal as to construe such language into an approbation of injustice. Yet this is precisely the sort of applause which is bestowed on the conduct of the steward. Having thus exposed to you the meaning and design of the parable contained in the Gospel ; and rescued it, I hope satisfactorily, from the unjust aspersions of the enemies of Christianity, I will now endeavour to make it subservient to your instruction and edification.

Inconsistent as it may appear with the character of a Minister of the Gospel, whose duty it is to inculcate the doctrine of not loving the world, nor the things that are in the world, to take, himself, the world for his model, and to recommend the same to his hearers, yet these two things I am about to do. I am about to imitate the example of worldlings, and to exhort you to do the same. Let me then suppose a father to be on the eve of sending his son on a commercial speculation to a distant country, abounding with a variety of valuable articles, where success, on the one hand, would enable him to realize an immense fortune, but failure, on the other, would inevitably involve him in irretrievable ruin. Let me suppose, at the same time, the climate of that country to have a strong tendency, by its extreme heat, to relax the constitution ; and its productions to be such as to require no small discernment to distinguish

those of real, from others which are only of apparent value. Finally, let me suppose that our young adventurer would, in the prosecution of his enterprise, be inevitably exposed to the allurements of the profligate, who would endeavour to seduce him from his application to business, and to the opposition of the malevolent, who would counteract his exertions. Under these circumstances, the following, it is not improbable, would be the language of the parent. “My son, you are about to embark, with the whole of your property, on a voyage to a distant country, preeminently distinguished by the richness of its productions. The object of your voyage is, to employ to advantage the effects which you take out with you, in the purchase of those rich and valuable commodities : and remember, that if you succeed in your important undertaking, an accumulation of wealth, which will raise you to the summit of worldly happiness, will be your enviable lot ; but that should your enterprise prove unsuccessful, as you have no ulterior resources to look to, your absolute ruin will be the dreadful alternative. Think not, however, my son, that I am sending you on a rash and hazardous adventure—by no means ; —for if you duly attend to my parental admonitions, and act invariably in conformity with them, your success is infallible ; and if you fail, the fault will be your own. There is something, it is true, in the climate of the country to which you are going, which is calculated to enfeeble the ener-

gies of your nature—and to beget indolence. But that pernicious influence you must be careful to counteract by exercise and temperance. Among the various articles which will be presented to your view, you will behold many which may be apt to dazzle you with a false brilliancy, and with which you will see the inhabitants not unfrequently decorated. These, however, you are to recollect, are of little, or no, intrinsic worth; and if brought to market, will undoubtedly be rejected. A due attention to the rules which I have prescribed to you, will enable you to make a just discrimination on these occasions, and prevent you from being imposed upon by deceitful appearances. And should the dissolute inhabitants of the country attempt, by the display of their fascinating attractions, to draw you off from the pursuit of your concerns, into the delusive paths of sensual indulgence, or the malignant endeavour, by their opposition, to discourage you,—let the important consideration, on the one hand, of the princely fortune which will be the reward of your perseverance,—and of the ruin, on the other, which will be the unavoidable consequence of the relaxation of your efforts, stimulate you to a firm and unconquerable resistance of the combined attacks of seduction and malevolence, and prompt you to persist with constancy in the prosecution of your undertaking.”

Such, my friends, is the advice which a worldling may be thought to give to his son under the circumstances which I have described, with a view

to the promotion of his temporal interests. And why may not a Christian monitor be allowed to have recourse to similar admonitions to the faithful committed to his charge, with a view to the promotion of their eternal interests? Is it right that the children of this world should be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Surely not. Nor is it so considered by our blessed Saviour in the Gospel, who evidently meant the observation to be regarded as a reproach. I will copy, therefore, the wise counsels of the worldling; and most earnestly do I exhort you to avail yourselves of them, in the application which I shall make of them to an object of incalculably superior importance—the salvation of your immortal souls. Remember, then my friends, that your Father, who is in heaven, has sent you into this distant country, which is far removed from his heavenly habitation;—that he has given to each of you a portion of his substance, wherewith to traffic;—that, in the words of our blessed Saviour, “to some he has given five talents, to some two, to some only one, to every one according to his proper ability;” that, if by your industrious exertions, you acquire of the goods which you are commissioned to purchase, a quantity proportionate to the amount of the capital with which you are commanded to trade, your fortunes will be made for eternity; but that if, on the contrary, by your supineness, or dissipation, you neglect to employ them, or squander them away unprofitably, wretchedness beyond descrip-

tion will be your everlasting doom. The talents allotted to you, for the purpose of carrying on your commercial concerns, are the faculties with which you are endowed, both of mind and body. The goods which you are commissioned to procure, are the virtues which adorn the Christian character; and the fortunes which those goods will enable you to realize, are those immense treasures of unutterable and boundless happiness, with which you will be eternally enriched in God's heavenly kingdom.

But that in this, your spiritual traffic for goods which may make you rich for eternity, you may not be the dupes of ignorance and deceit, I cannot caution you too strongly against certain outward appearances of virtue, which you may possibly be apt to mistake for realities. Yes, my friends, there are false virtues to be met with in the world, and those too in great abundance, which may have, perhaps, an external resemblance of the celestial qualities whose names they bear? but which, in sterling merit, and substantial worth, are as different from them in reality as tinsel is from gold. There is a false piety, which, not being deeply rooted in the heart, evaporates in ebullitions of devotional fervor. There is a false humility, which, under the assumed disguise of self-abasement, conceals the demon of spiritual pride. There is a false meekness, which, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, exhibits to the eye the amiable appearance of all that is mild and gentle,

whilst anger or revenge inwardly corrodes the heart. There is a false continency, which refrains, indeed, from overt acts of sensual gratification, but which cherishes in secret those carnal desires which, in the words of St. Peter, "war against the soul." There is a false repentance, which is the offspring of fear. There is a false compassion, which is the hypocrisy of contempt. There is a false zeal, which assumes the tone, and speaks the dialect of religious ardor, but which owes, in reality, its birth to some malignant, or vindictive passion. There is a false charity, which, in its ostentatious pretensions to liberality of sentiment, accords indiscriminately all the treasures of grace here, and all the blessings of glory hereafter, to persons of every religious denomination, though Christ himself has limited them exclusively to the faithful votaries of that one true Church which himself established. "Go ye," said he to his Apostles, "into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." (MATT. c. xvi. v. 15, 16.)

Such, my friends, and many more than time will allow me at present to enumerate, are the false virtues by which you are liable to be imposed upon in the spiritual traffic in which you are commissioned to engage, with a view to the establishment of your future well-being. But you have an infallible criterion by which you may always distinguish them from such as are true and

genuine ; and that criterion is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For in that divine instrument, every true and genuine virtue is so unequivocally described, and such admirable specimens of each are exhibited in the character of its Divine Author, that a diligent attention to it must necessarily preserve you from the possibility of deception.

True, indeed, it is, that the climate in which you live is, by its relaxing influence, most hostile to habits of vigorous exertion ; and that the inhabitants of the country, with whom more or less you are compelled to associate, may oppose obstacles to the success of your pursuits. The climate in which you live is the torrid zone of concupiscence, which operates so forcibly in opposition to every virtuous effort, that St. Paul, speaking from his own personal experience, hesitates not to ascribe to it a degree of power which is almost irresistible. “For to will,” says the Apostle, “is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do.” (Rom. c. 7, v. 18, 19.) Formidable, however, as are these obstacles which you have here to encounter, measures are not wanting, which, if resolutely adopted, will, by the aid of divine grace, enable you to surmount them. That which beyond every other I most earnestly recommend to you, with a view both of resisting the influence of concupiscence, with all the various artifices of human seduction, and all the efforts

of human malignity, to withdraw you from the pursuit of the great business of eternity, is a serious consideration of the magnitude of the recompense which awaits, on the one hand, your successful exertions, and of the extremity of the evils, on the other, which will be the inevitable consequence of your inattention and neglect. Oh ! then, my friends, let me exhort you to reflect, with the utmost attention of which your minds are capable, on these two momentous objects. Let me intreat you to make them the subjects of your most serious and frequent meditations, and to endeavour to impress your minds with that feeling conviction of their vast importance which may influence the general tenor of your conduct. For this purpose, transport yourselves with me in spirit, to that glorious habitation of the blessed, where they reign, together with Christ, in the kingdom of his heavenly Father. And do thou, most merciful Jesus, cause, I beseech thee, the portals of the eternal city to be flung open, that we may be indulged with, at least, a transient view of the transcendent felicity enjoyed by thy chosen servants, in that celestial abode.

Behold them, my friends : there they are, “ that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” (Apoc. c. vii. v. 9.) There, there they are, and among them you may discover, perhaps, some

of your own friends or relatives smiling upon you with affectionate tenderness, and giving, if possible, even to heaven itself, additional attractions, by the cheering prospect which they hold out to you of your future re-union with them. Happy, happy beings ! all your labors, afflictions, and troubles, are now at an end. Your tears have all passed away like dew-drops before the morning sun. The severe conflicts in which you were engaged during your mortal lives with the enemies of your salvation, have terminated in a permanent and everlasting peace,—and the scars which many of you may still, perhaps, retain of the wounds which you may have had the misfortune to receive, are honorable memorials of the sincerity of your repentance. Your joys are now as complete as your present disembodied state will allow them to be : and your blessed spirits are already in possession of all those intellectual and sentimental delights which require not the intervention of the organs of sense, and which cannot fail to afford the highest satisfaction to minds of your refined and heavenly temper. But the period may not be far distant when even the happiness which you already enjoy, great and exuberant as it is beyond comprehension, will experience a very considerable augmentation. For when the number of God's elect shall have received its accomplishment, then shall the mighty trumpet sound, which shall awaken your earthly remains from the slumber of the tomb, and restore them to you incorruptible and

immortal. Then, indeed, your joy shall be full; and your bodies, the old companions of your former troubles, afflictions, and hardships, which you endured together with such exemplary resignation, will participate with you in the happiness of your condition, and improve it by the addition of such pleasures of sense as in their renovated state they will be capable of imparting. And this joint partnership in the invaluable goods which will be the happy fruits of your past united exertions, no circumstances or events will ever more be able to dissolve.

From the joyful mansions of the blessed, which it is so delightful to contemplate, I have now to request you to bear me company, whilst, with feelings widely different, but with not less profit, perhaps, I descend in spirit into the dismal regions of the reprobate. The angel of the Apocalypse shall disclose to us the horrid secrets of that abyss of woe. "And I saw," says St. John, "an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit." (APOC. c. xx. v. 1.) Oh! what a scene of horrors assails my sight! A lake of fire exhibiting amidst its lurid flames the wretched victims of God's implacable anger! "And the dead," says the same evangelical prophet, "were judged according to their works. And whosoever was not written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire." Of the intensity of the sufferings of these miserable beings, some idea may be formed from the words of our blessed Saviour,

which represent them as a prey to the incessant gnawings of a deathless worm, and expressing by lamentations and gnashing of teeth the pangs which they endure. And these dreadful and excruciating torments of the reprobate, like the inconceivable happiness of the elect, we are assured by the same divine authority, will never have an end. "The wicked," says Christ, "shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."

Having thus presented you with a faint representation of the inexpressible happiness enjoyed, on the one hand, by God's chosen servants, in his heavenly kingdom, and of the extreme misery endured, on the other hand, by the wretched objects of his malediction,—permit me now to ask you, if there be any earthly consideration whatsoever which should induce you to expose yourselves to the most remote danger of not attaining the one, and of incurring the other? Will you allow any of those trifling difficulties and slight inconveniences, which inordinate self-love is but too apt to magnify to such a degree, to prevent you from discharging any part of your duty, when interests of such vast importance are connected with it? Will you sacrifice the salvation of your immortal souls at the ignoble shrine of sensual gratification? Will you be allured by the smiles, or intimidated by the frowns of the profligate and impious, from an uniform course of conscientious rectitude, when all the glories of

heavenly Jerusalem, on the one hand, and all the horrors of the infernal abyss, on the other, conspire to furnish you with the most cogent motives to pursue it with unshaken constancy? You will not, I trust, my friends, be so insensible to your best and dearest interests. No: you will not suffer in your regard the children of this world to be wiser in their generation than the children of light. And whilst by your diligence and fidelity in the service of your divine Master, you cautiously avoid the unprincipled conduct of the unjust steward who wasted his master's goods, you will imitate his sagacity in providing for your own eternal welfare. By a charitable distribution of alms, in proportion to your abilities, to the needy and distressed, "you will make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity;" and when your earthly tabernacles shall be dissolved, you will not fail to be received into everlasting dwellings.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR SAVIOUR WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xix. v. 41-47. At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying, If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes; for the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation. And entering into the temple, he began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying to them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. And he was teaching daily in the temple.

THE Gospel of this Sunday exhibits to our view a most affecting scene,—that of the blessed Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem! He was descending from the Mount of Olives in his way to that metropolis of the Jewish nation, when, fixing stedfastly his eyes upon it, he suddenly burst into a flood of tears. But what was there in the appearance of this fair daughter of Sion, as it is called by the prophet, to excite so tenderly the compassionate feelings of the world's Redeemer? Was not this the city of the great King? Was it not amongst all the cities of the

earth the peculiar object of the partiality of his Heavenly Father? Was it not the chosen depositary of his laws and worship? Had he not made it the honored seat of his theocratical government? Was it not within its walls that was erected that magnificent temple dedicated to his honor, and distinguished by visible tokens of his august presence? Was it not within the veil of its mysterious sanctuary that from the mercy seat, as from his throne of royalty, he awfully issued his authoritative edicts? Had not the loftiness of its walls, the strength of its ramparts, and the stateliness of its buildings, rendered it an object of universal admiration? Whence then those characteristic marks of affliction which were manifested by the blessed Jesus on beholding a spectacle of such glory and magnificence? Oh! my friends, it was that very spectacle, contrasted with the sad picture, which was then present to his mind, of the ruin and desolation which he distinctly saw to be at no distant period prepared to overwhelm it, that drew from his eyes those proofs of sympathetic sorrow, and caused him to give vent to his compassionate feelings in that pathetic strain recorded in the Gospel:—"If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and

the children that are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." In this moving address our blessed Saviour expresses most feelingly his ardent wish that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had accepted the gracious overture of mercy which he had so kindly made them, the terms of which were so much for their advantage ; and as bitterly laments their obstinacy in rejecting it, which was the fatal occasion of that spiritual blindness that was now in justice inflicted upon them, and was about to involve them in all those great and tremendous calamities which afterwards befel that infatuated people. They pertinaciously refused the articles of peace, which the Eternal, in his mercy, had proffered to them through the mediation of his beloved Son, and they were therefore made to feel the dreadful effects of his avenging justice. The instruments which he employed for the purpose were the formidable Roman legions, who, under the command of Titus, marched against their city, cast a trench about it, as Jesus had foretold, compassed it around, straitened it on every side, beat it flat to the ground, and the inhabitants that were in it, and demolished it so completely as not to leave a stone upon a stone. Never,—no, never within the memory of man, was the siege of any other city accompanied with such scenes of horror and of complicated atrocity as was that of the hapless, the miserable Jerusalem. Assailed from without

by an enraged enemy, provoked to the highest degree by the obstinate resistance of the besieged,—distracted within by the animosity of contending factions,—famine and pestilence spreading around their destructive ravages,—its edifices demolished, its temple in a blaze:—such were the most striking and prominent features which marked the siege of that celebrated metropolis of God's chosen people. Upwards of a million of its wretched inhabitants are stated to have fallen amidst its ruins; and those who survived the fate of their unhappy city were sent captives into foreign countries, there to renew the lamentations of their forefathers, when seated on the banks of the rivers of Babylon. Nor is there hardly a country on the face of the earth in which some of the descendants of those deplorable victims of the divine wrath are not to be met with, even at the present day, proclaiming, by their dispersion, to the inhabitants of the globe, the awful judgments of heaven on the unconquerable obstinacy and base ingratitude of their perverse ancestors.

My friends, tears of compassion, similar to those which in the days of his flesh streamed from the eyes of the blessed Jesus over the city of Jerusalem, he may be conceived also to let fall at present, from his celestial abode, on every sinful soul, which, by its criminal disorders, resembles Jerusalem. "For we have not," says St. Paul, "a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities." (HEB. c. iv. v. 15.) Not only does

he compassionate the wretched condition of sinners, as he did that of the unhappy Jerusalem, but he is animated, in like manner, with a most ardent desire to reclaim them from their evil ways, to make them sensible of the things that are for their peace, and by restoring them to the favor of his heavenly Father, to avert from them the scourge of his avenging justice. How, in fact, is it possible for any one to consider attentively the wonderful work of the redemption of mankind, and all the various circumstances connected with it, in the economy of grace, without being convinced of this consoling truth? For whom, in reality, did the world's Redeemer plan and execute this marvellous system of boundless mercy? Was it not for sinners? Were not sinners the objects for whom he subjected himself to this labor of love? Was it not for their transgressions that he was wounded? Was it not to make their peace with his Eternal Father that he became a victim of propitiation for them? And has he not purchased for them, with his blood, the happy restoration of their forfeited inheritance? Yes, my friends, it was for sinners that the blessed Jesus did all this. "For God," says the Apostle, "commendeth his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time Christ died for us." (Rom. c. v. v. 8, 9.) Where then is the sinner, whatever may be the number or magnitude of his crimes, who, after so sacred and solemn a pledge of the merciful disposition of his Redeemer in his

behalf, can doubt of pardon, provided, in compliance with his gracious invitation, he will open his eyes to the things that are for his peace, and avail himself, by his conversion, of the time of his visitation? Would this immortal deliverer of the human race have devoted himself, as he did, for their emancipation from the slavery of sin, and their restoration to the liberty of the children of God, and afterwards refuse to extend the arm of his mercy to poor unfortunate captives claiming deliverance in right of his conquest, and soliciting, in consequence, his interposition in their behalf? Would he, in compassion to lost man, have condescended to stoop from the supereminent exaltation of the Godhead to the lowliness of humanity? Would he have assumed of that lowliness the most abject form, even that of a slave; and would he in that humiliating form have toiled, bled, agonized, expired in excruciating torments, for the express purpose of giving efficacy to the sinner's repentance, and yet, after all, allow that repentance to be unproductive and useless? No; sooner would the husbandman, after all his care, assiduity, and labor, in the cultivation of the soil and sowing of the grain, neglect to reap the ripened corn which should offer itself to the sickle, than would the Redeemer of mankind refuse to receive those worthy fruits of penance, which proceed from an humble and contrite heart.

Of his favorable disposition towards repentant sinners, a striking proof may also be gathered from

the forms in which he has chosen to be exhibited to us in the sacred Scriptures. When a person sitting for his likeness, to be taken by an artist, desires to be represented in any particular character, his partiality for that character may thence be fairly inferred. Now the characters in which our blessed Lord appears to have delighted to be delineated to us in Holy Writ, beyond every other, are those of a father, a physician, a shepherd ; of a father going forth to meet his prodigal son, who had dissipated his substance in the gratification of his passions, and testifying, at the return of that son, the greatness of his joy, by the most expressive marks of parental tenderness ; of a physician, furnished with remedies for every distemper which sin may possibly inflict on the souls of men. “They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick” (MAT. c. ix. v. 12.) was the reply made by this benevolent friend of sinners, to the supercilious Pharisees, who expressed themselves shocked at his familiar intercourse with persons notorious for their irregular conduct ; of a shepherd leaving the rest of his flock, to go in pursuit of the hapless wanderer, that had strayed from its companions into the ways of wickedness, which lead to perdition. Is it possible to reflect on these delightful representations, which are given of the blessed Jesus in Holy Writ, so descriptive of whatever is kind, tender, and beneficent, and not be impressed with an unalterable conviction of his ardent zeal for the salvation of sinners.

But that is not all. For to these consoling and animating descriptions he has left us of his person, he has added, moreover, the most positive declarations of his merciful designs in favor of those who repent of their transgressions. "He came not into the world," as he explicitly assures us, "to call the just, but sinners to repentance." "It was not," he again informs us, "to judge the world, but that through him the world might be saved," that "this only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, condescended to be made flesh and to dwell amongst us." (JOHN *c. i. v. 14.*) "This day is salvation come to thy house," were the words in which he addressed the penitent Zaccheus, on entering his dwelling to become his guest, "for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." LUKE, *c. xix. v. 9-10.*) "Son," said this tender Father, to one whom, in mercy, he had chastised with a bodily affliction, for the benefit of his soul, "son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much," were the soothing expressions which penitential tears, flowing from the fountain of divine love extorted, on another occasion, from his blessed lips. Surely, my friends, you will acknowledge that the weighty considerations which, even thus far, I have presented to your view, are sufficient to inspire with confidence the most abandoned sinners, provided they be disposed to renounce their evil ways, and return, with sen-

timents of heartfelt compunction, into the path of duty.

There is another consideration, however, still remaining, which I wish most anxiously to impress upon your minds. And what is that? Oh! my friends, it is a consideration of that transcendently bright and exhilarating description, that, on the disclosure of it, I can almost imagine despondency itself raising from the ground its downcast eyes, and beginning to smile. But what is it? Why, my friends, it is the actual and abiding presence, in the court of Heaven, of that same merciful Redeemer, of whose affectionate disposition, in your regard, I have already laid before you such unquestionable proofs. It is his actual and abiding presence in the court of Heaven itself, where, in the words of the Apostle, "he is always living to make intercession for us." (HEB. c. vii. v. 25.) Yes, sinners, Jesus, the blessed Jesus himself, not content with having sealed, by his death, your reconciliation with his Eternal Father, and furnished you in his life with such powerful motives of confidence and encouragement, now exercises, at the right hand of God, the high offices of your intercessor and advocate. There he is, bearing, in his hands, and feet, and side, the glorious scars of the wounds which He received in the mighty conquest which he so nobly achieved, of man's salvation. There He is, seated for ever in the august presence of the ancient of days, encompassed around with the

immense effulgence of his infinite merits, and pleading, with irresistible influence, the cause of sinners. Can justice be inexorable, when so powerful an advocate pleads for mercy? Will not the righteous sovereign of the universe be appeased, when, looking upon his beloved son, in whom he is well pleased, he beholds in him the self-devoted avenger of his violated laws, and the restorer of order, soliciting himself the pardon of his rebellious subjects on their return to their allegiance. "Who is he that shall condemn?" exclaims the Apostle of the Gentiles, (it is) "Christ Jesus that died, yea that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. c. viii. v. 34.) Never, then, O thou compassionate and benevolent friend of sinners, never, as long as I shall behold thee seated at the right hand of thy Eternal Father, with a nature similar to my own, never will I persuade myself that sinners, repentant sinners, will be for ever the objects of his implacable wrath. And when the awful form of his avenging justice shall rise in terrific prospect to my view, I will throw myself with confidence into the arms of thy mercy, and repose with conscious security in their protection.

But should the sinner, like the wretched inhabitants of Jerusalem, be insensible to the tender invitations of mercy, let him contemplate, in their calamities, a figurative representation of the rigorous judgments which, at no distant period,

will fall upon himself, if he persists in imitating their unconquerable obstinacy. Nothing could exceed the mild and gentle demeanor of the merciful Jesus to that ungrateful people. Without any appearance of stateliness, or parade, he mixed with them in familiar intercourse, and was constantly employed among them in acts of beneficence. "He went about," says St. Peter, "doing good." But as the most tranquil streams acquire, from resistance, the rapidity of a torrent, so the Saviour of the world, provoked by the obstacles which his ungrateful people opposed to his goodness, passed from overtures of indulgent mercy to those terrible denunciations of vengeance, contained in the Gospel, and which were rigorously carried into execution. "For the days shall come upon thee," &c. "Now all these things," says St. Paul, speaking of the punishments inflicted on the Jewish people, on account of their sins, "now all these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 COR. *c.* x. v. 11.) The dreadful calamities, therefore, which were experienced by the Jews at the siege of Jerusalem, are to be regarded as figures of those disasters which the unrepenting sinner may expect to suffer at the eve of his dissolution, who, by the obstinacy of his opposition to the graces of heaven, may be said not to have known the time of his visitation. Yes, sinner, unrepenting sinner, the days shall come upon thee when enemies, far more

terrible than the Roman legions, shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side. The enemies to whom I allude, are those of whom St. Paul speaks, in his epistle to the Ephesians, when he says, "for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." (EPH. c. vi. v. 12.) Such, sinner, is that formidable host of foes which will be let loose against thee at the approach of thy last hour. They will employ against thee all the resources of their malicious ingenuity, to cut thee off from the assistance of heaven, and attack thee on all sides with desperate violence. They will disqualify thee, by the dispositions with which they will inspire thee, for relief from above. By the frightful representations with which they will assail thee of the criminal disorders of thy past life, they will beat thee, like Jerusalem, flat to the ground. And of the proud structure of thy presumptuous hopes, which thy vain confidence in heaven's insulted mercy induced thee to rear, not a stone will be left remaining upon a stone. Thy passions, too, like the contending factions which raged with such fury within the walls of Jerusalem, will carry on within thee an intestine war. From the multitude of thy dead works, as from the unburied bodies of the slain, during the siege of Jerusalem, will proceed a pestilence which will infect thy whole soul with its contagious in-

fluence, and the progress of which, from its incurable malignity, is no longer to be arrested. A famine, also, more dreadful far than that which was experienced by the Jewish people, will aggravate the horrors of that fatal crisis,—a famine arising from the absolute privation of the graces of heaven, so necessary to render fruitful the soil of thy heart, and the want of which will leave it in a state of unproductive sterility. Thou wouldst not, in due time, know the things that were for thy peace,—and now, by a just judgment of God, they shall be hidden from thine eyes. Thou wouldst not “seek the Lord whilst he might be found, and call upon him when he was near,”—and now thou “shalt seek him, and shall not find him, and thou shalt die in thy sins.” And thy soul,—alas ! thy miserable, unrepenting soul, that temple dedicated at the baptismal font, as was that of Jerusalem, to the living God, but which, like the Jews, as observed by our blessed Saviour in the Gospel, thou hast converted, by thy profanations, into a den of thieves,—wrapt at length in a blaze, incomparably more terrible than that which consumed the temple of Jerusalem, shall be laid prostrate for ever in irreparable ruin.

Having thus unfolded to you the consolations and the terrors which the Gospel of this day has suggested to my mind, let me now exhort you to avail yourselves of the former, that you may not hereafter be exposed to the latter. “Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of

salvation." Should your consciences reproach you with the guilt of sin, have recourse, without delay, to the means which are yet in your power of forgiveness and reconciliation. "If any man sin," says St. John, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world." (1 JOHN, c. ii. v. 2, 3.) To that powerful advocate let your supplications be addressed. In his boundless merits let your confidence be placed. Disclose, with sincerity, the distempers of your souls, to those whom he has appointed to exercise in his name the charitable office of spiritual physicians. Bewail them bitterly, with feelings of penitential sorrow. Avoid with caution occasions and circumstances which may expose you to the danger of a repetition of their attacks. Pursue with constancy the salutary regimen prescribed to you for the preservation of your recovered health, and you will not fail to enjoy hereafter the inestimable blessing of everlasting life.

SERMON XXXIV.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xviii. v. 9-14. At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray : the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself ; O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in the week ; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying, O God be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

THE parable of this day's Gospel was addressed by our blessed Saviour to certain persons who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. That is to say, it was addressed to those self-conceited and disdainful beings, who, resting with confidence their claim to justification, on the foundation of their own imaginary excellence, looked down upon others, whom they were not disposed to view in the same favorable light, as objects worthy of sovereign contempt. The design of the divine author of the same parable was to expose their erroneous and unjust estimations, by showing their opposition to the decisions of him who is the sole

infallible and impartial judge of merit. The characters brought forward by him for the purpose, are selected from two opposite classes of men ; the one remarkable for their punctilious exactitude in complying with the ordinances of the Mosaic law, the other, notorious for their inattention to them, as well as for the general licentiousness of their lives. The former, in short, is a Pharisee, the latter a Publican. Both are represented as going up to the temple of God, for the laudable purpose of divine worship. “Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican.” But as the dispositions and sentiments which accompany their respective performance of this solemn duty of religion are widely different, so also are the effects which they experience. The Pharisee, in the first place, with head erect, and with a mien expressive of the lofty opinion which he entertains of his high deserts, advancing boldly into the temple, stations himself, as it would seem, in the proximity of the altar, and having presented a sort of complimentary address of thanks to the Deity for his exemption from those grosser crimes of extortion, injustice, and adultery, which he very modestly attributes to the rest of mankind, and particularly to that vile Publican there, whom he describes at a distance, engaged, too, like himself, in an external act of religious homage : he dwells with much complacency on the subject of his own meritorious deeds, (for such he deems the frequency of his

fasts, and his scrupulous attention to the payment of tithes), and then returns home, highly satisfied, as may fairly be supposed, with himself and his performance. “The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; as also is this Publican. I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” The Publican is next exhibited to our view. He is not seen, like the supercilious Pharisee, marching confidently with intrepid step, and taking, like him, his station near the altar; nor is there any thing in his attitude, his gestures, or his language, which indicates sentiments of inward self-esteem. No; retired in a remote part of one of the courts of the temple, as if willing to avoid the public notice, we perceive him, with eyes cast down towards the earth in deep humiliation, testifying, by the blows which he inflicts upon his breast, his condemnation of himself, and denoting, by the terms of his suppliant address, the consciousness of his guilt, with his entire reliance for forgiveness on the mercy of Heaven. “And the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying, O God be merciful to me a sinner.” It can hardly be necessary to state which of these two characters found acceptance with that Almighty Being, to whom their petitions were presented, since it is virtually contained in the subsequent declaration of the sacred text, “that this man went down

to his house justified rather than the other.” And the reason assigned for the favorable reception which the latter experienced at the throne of mercy, in preference to the former, is expressed in the following most important maxim with which the Gospel closes : “ Because every one who exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

In the character of the Pharisee, with which the parable opens, a lively picture is delineated to us of those deluded zealots, who, contemplating with spiritual pride their own immunity from certain scandalous excesses, which they observe to be very prevalent among mankind, and who, valuing themselves for their regularity in their discharge of the duties of religious worship, are induced, by these considerations, not only to entertain exalted opinions of their own sanctity, but to censure with harsh and uncharitable severity the conduct of others. Notwithstanding, however, the favorable judgments which they pass upon themselves, and the high estimation in which they may, perhaps, be held by their deluded admirers, we are authorized by the Gospel to assert, without hesitation, that these their partial and unjust decisions are reversed at God’s unerring tribunal, and with reason. For supposing them even to be eminent for the brightest virtues which shed a lustre on the Christian character, yet if, like the proud Pharisee, they consider those virtues as the natural growth of their own soil,—if they consider them

as the results of the unassisted efforts of their own powers, instead of recommending themselves by them to the approbation of God, they convert them into occasions of incurring his displeasure. For they are guilty, in the first place, of a sacrilegious robbery, by appropriating to themselves the honor which belongs to God as the great author "of every best gift, and every perfect gift, which," as St. James observes, "descends from the Father of Lights." (JAMES, *c. i. v. 17.*) They are chargeable, in the next place, with base ingratitude, in refusing to recognize the kind hand of their munificent benefactor, whilst they are in the actual enjoyment of the fruits of his bounty. And by establishing, moreover, their claims to justification, on the basis of their own merits, they presumptuously attempt to erect the edifice of their eternal salvation on a foundation different from that which Christ Jesus has laid. "For other foundation no man can lay," says St. Paul, "but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." (1 COR. *c. iii. v. 11.*)

Thus far, however, I have argued on the supposition of their being actually endowed with the choicest virtues which embellish the character of a Christian. But that is a supposition which I am not by any means disposed to admit, for their defective system of religious conduct is not of that comprehensive description. Their views of Christianity are contracted and partial. If they be exempt from certain vices, to the perpetration

of which they see others addicted, but to which they themselves, either from natural inclination, or from the circumstances of their condition, have little, perhaps, or no temptation, and if they be, at the same time, exact in the performance of their periodical exercises of devotion, they are perfectly satisfied, and fondly imagine themselves, in their self-complacency, to be distinguished favorites of heaven. But this, my friends, is a very erroneous notion ; for allowing them, like the Pharisee, to have nothing wherewith to reproach themselves on the score, for instance, of extortion, injustice, or adultery, yet are there not many other crimes, equally odious in the sight of God, which they commit habitually without remorse ? What more common than to behold these haughty pretenders to superior sanctity indulging the licentiousness of their unbridled tongues, in vilifying, without mercy, the character of their neighbours ? Should any one presume to express his disapprobation of the violent measures which their intemperate zeal may stimulate them to adopt,—should he profess himself friendly to a more moderate line of conduct,—should he, by his mild, gentle, and conciliating language, endeavour to gain over the enemies of his religion, instead of exasperating them by the vehemence of his declamations, they immediately represent him as, at best, but a lukewarm brother. What do I say ? They denounce him, perhaps, as an enemy in disguise,—as a wolf in sheep's clothing,—as a man who is willing to

barter his religion for worldly advantages, and who only wears the garb of piety to conceal more effectually the impiety of his designs. "But who art thou, presumptuous man," may I be permitted to ask with the apostle St. James, "who art thou, that like the Pharisee in the parable, darest thus to pronounce a sentence of condemnation on thine unconvicted neighbour?" Although his conduct were in the highest degree criminal, still would it little become *thee* to expose his vices to the world. For charity, which is the very soul of that religion of which thou standest forth the avowed champion, "covereth," says the apostle, in the true sense of the expression, "a multitude of sins." But thou hast not even that plausible pretext for thy wanton attacks upon his character; since neither his sentiments,—as far as thou hast any certain knowledge of them,—nor his language, nor his conduct, afford thee any just ground for thy defamatory animadversions. Whence then those acrimonious invectives which thou dischargest against him with such ungoverned fury? Why, the true cause of them is this. It is the unpardonable opposition of his opinions to thine own on subjects in which thy feelings are deeply interested. And thus whilst thou persuadest thyself that thou art fighting strenuously the battles of the Lord, thou art engaged in reality, though unknown, perhaps, to thyself, in avenging the cause of thine irritated self-love. Yes, my friends, such is the conduct of these intemperate zealots. I do not

say, they are hypocrites. God forbid ! I do not say, that by false pretences to affected piety, they wish to impose upon the minds of others. No. But this I say, that they certainly impose most egregiously upon themselves. Fondly imagining that they are embarked in the defence of all that is most sacred and venerable in religion,—confounding the mere impulse of passion with the holy ardor of religious zeal,—identifying the prejudices of their deluded minds with the incontestible principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,—and considering, at the same time, the opponents of the former to be decided enemies to the latter,—they conceive themselves justified in employing every means in their power to depreciate their characters, and to destroy their credit. But such is not the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which, in the language of St. Paul, prohibits the doing of evil that good may come from it. Now that defamation is an evil, and that too of no ordinary magnitude, we have the authority of the apostle St. James for asserting. “For if any man,” says he, “think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.”

Nor is the liberty they take in aspersing the characters of their neighbours, the only fault which is laid to the charge of these misguided zealots. For though they are laudably attentive to the worship of God both in public and in private, and careful to observe the ordinances of the

Church in whatever regards its external discipline, yet in the due regulation of the affections of their hearts, and in the important duties of social and domestic life, they are frequently remarked to be deplorably deficient. Instead of manifesting that self-command which is so essential a part of religious conduct, instead of displaying that meekness under provocations, that patience in afflictions, and that entire resignation to the will of God in all the various occurrences of their lives, they betray, on the contrary, by their eruptions of anger, their fretfulness and querulousness on these occasions, the undisciplined state of their ungoverned hearts. In their intercourse with mankind, they are oftentimes morose, gloomy, and censorious. They will not take part, no not they, they will not take part with their profane neighbours in the unhallowed pleasures of social enjoyment and convivial mirth. They will not tolerate in others the enjoyment of those sweets which they refuse to taste themselves. They will not allow for the little frailties, and pardonable irregularities, which the penetrating keenness of their sanctimonious perspicacity fails not to discover. And with beams in their own eyes, they are for ever upon the watch to detect, if possible, the mote in the eye of their brother. Their behaviour within their domestic circles is also liable to much reproach. Contentious with those around them, dissatisfied with those beneath them, for ever varying in their inconstant tempers according to the

versatility of their capricious humours, they are a constant source of uneasiness and vexation to those whose comfort it should be their endeavour to promote. Yet these forsooth are the persons, who, because they behold a neighbour deviating perhaps occasionally from the strait line of moral rectitude, which they themselves invariably pursue, and observe him to be somewhat remiss in the due performance of devotional exercises, to which they themselves, with pious and commendable zeal, are religiously attentive, pronounce sentence of condemnation upon him. But may not he, ye self-constituted judges of another's servant, may not he, with at least equal reason, pronounce sentence of condemnation upon you? For may not he, on the other hand, be exempt from those vices to which you are addicted? May not he be assiduous in the discharge of those weightier duties of charity and mercy which you neglect? May not his conduct, though by no means correct in every respect, be deemed less heinous in the eye of heaven, as the unhappy consequence of the corrupt propensities of the human heart, than yours, which is the offspring of deliberate malignity? Yet he seeks not, like you, by partial comparisons, to justify himself at your expence. He does not, like the Pharisee, "trust in himself as just, and despise others." He does not, even in any manner, pretend to excuse or palliate his guilt. He readily, on the contrary, acknowledges himself culpable, and, like the humble Publican in the

parable, is perhaps striking his breast, and saying from his heart,—“ O God, be merciful to me a sinner ;” whilst you, (oh ! how unlike that tender and compassionate friend of sinners, who “ would not break the bruised reed, or extinguish the smoking flax !”) whilst you, I say, presume to despise the humble and contrite heart, which God himself, as the Scripture informs us, will never despise. Yet, be assured, that that despised and reprobated sinner will experience more indulgence at the throne of mercy than you will. For our blessed Saviour has himself declared, that—“ the publicans and sinners shall go into the kingdom of God before you.” (MATT. c. xxi. v. 31.)

Having exhibited to you, in the character of the Pharisee, a lively representation of that proud, self-sufficient, and disdainful, disposition, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the intemperate zealot, and endeavoured to shew you how inconsistent it is with the principles of the Gospel, and how odious it is in the estimation of the Most High, I will now proceed to expose to you, in the striking contrast of the humble Publican, a just picture of that lowliness of mind which marks the conduct of the repentant sinner, and to demonstrate to you its perfect conformity with the genius of Christianity, and its tendency to procure the favor of heaven. “ The Publican,” says the parable, “ standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying, O God be merciful to me a sinner.” Behold,

my friends, in the attitude, the gestures, the language, the sentiments of this humble Publican, a true image of a sincere penitent, who after having strayed from the path of virtue, is penetrated with sorrow for his past misdeeds ; acknowledges without disguise, his criminal transgressions, and relies for pardon on the abundance of God's mercy. No sooner is he impressed with a deep sense of the enormity of his crimes, than he immediately conceives the most lowly opinion of himself. He starts back with horror from the contemplation of his own baseness. He is sensible that he has incurred the just displeasure of his Almighty Sovereign. He is convinced that, if he were punished according to his deserts, an eternity of woes would be his unavoidable destiny ; and he knows at the same time that, of himself, he is destitute of the means of appeasing the Divine anger, or of averting the punishment which his sins deserve. In this state of confusion and abasement, what shall he do ? If he lift up his eyes towards Heaven, he will there behold the flaming sword of Heaven's avenging justice suspended over his head. He therefore casts them downwards to the earth ; and whilst he feelingly smites his breast, in token of his acknowledgment of the enormity of his offences, he sends forth the suppliant and earnest cries of his humble and contrite heart to his intercessor and advocate at the throne of mercy, solicits his powerful interposition in his behalf, and depends for forgiveness on the sole

efficacy of his infinite merits. Nor does he solicit in vain,—for his prayers are heard—his sins are cancelled—and, like the Publican in the parable, who went down to his house justified, his reconciliation with offended Heaven is accomplished. “For as every one who exalteth himself shall be humbled, so he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Such, my friends, are the admirable effects of humility, as exemplified in the parable of this day’s Gospel.—Nor shall we be surprised at those admirable effects, if we consider attentively the conformity of humility with the temper of Christianity, and its tendency to procure the divine favor. Christianity breathes throughout a spirit of humility. Its founder was exalted on account of his humiliations. He came upon the earth “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” His followers are taught to consider themselves, after their utmost exertions, as “unprofitable servants.” Those who are least, are promised to be the greatest in his Heavenly kingdom; and humility makes a distinguished figure in that bright catalogue of virtues with which we are presented in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Since, therefore, it evidently appears that such vast importance is attached, by Christianity, to this amiable quality, how can we wonder at the beneficial effects of which, as I have already described, it is productive?

If we consider, indeed, attentively, how much humility is calculated by its powerful and exten-

sive influence, to render us objects of the Divine complacency, we shall readily account for the happy consequences derived from the cultivation of it. For what can render us more acceptable to the eternal Father, than our resemblance to his only-begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased? And what can assimilate us more to this dear object of his tenderest affection, than that lowliness of mind which was so prominent a feature in his character?

This same celestial virtue is qualified, moreover, to recommend us to the Divine favor, not only because it impresses upon us one of the strongest marks of similitude to the character of the Son of God, but because it is also a fruitful source of a multiplicity of other Christian virtues. The man who is truly humble, is sensible of his weak and dependent state. He has no confidence whatsoever in the efficacy of his own unaided exertions. He is convinced of his obligations to the bounty of God for every comfort which he enjoys at present, and for every blessing which he hopes hereafter to attain. To him, therefore, as to the great fountain of every good and perfect gift, he pours forth the pious effusions of his soul in the warmest sentiments of adoration, gratitude, and love. The consciousness which he entertains of his own unworthiness causes him to be indulgent to the failings of others. He judges not, that he may not be judged. He condemns not, that he may not be condemned; and he freely forgives offences

committed against himself, in the humble hope that his Heavenly Father will also forgive him *his* offences. Pride, which is the cause of that irritability of feeling so prevalent in the breasts of those who are subject to it, being subdued by humility, he preserves, in the midst of provocations to anger, the serenity of his soul. As he is not confident in his own opinions, so neither is he offended at the opposite opinions of others. He is too sensible of his inherent defects, to suffer himself to be discomposed by reproof which he at any time may experience;—and not being inflated with lofty opinions of his own superiority above his fellows, he is kind, affable, and accommodating to all around him. His conviction, also, of the infirmity of his nature, prevents him from exposing himself to the occasions of sin, and induces him to have recourse to such salutary measures as are the best securities against it. Such, my friends, are the excellent fruits of humility, when it is deeply rooted in the heart. And well may a quality, which is pregnant with such a multiplicity of distinguished virtues, recommend its possessor to the esteem of the Most High, and draw down upon him the choicest blessings of his munificence. Cultivate it then, my friends, cultivate humility with all possible assiduity and care. Cultivate industriously this prolific germ of whatever contributes to adorn the Christian character; and not only will you be justified here on earth

by the Almighty Being "who rejects the proud, and gives his grace to the humble," but you will be glorified by him hereafter, in his Heavenly Kingdom. "For the Lord is nigh," says the Psalmist, "to those who are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit."

SERMON XXXV.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

 ON THE CURE OF THE MAN DEAF AND DUMB.

GOSPEL. *St. Mark*, vii. v. 31-37. At that time, Jesus going out of the coasts of Tyre, he came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And they bring to him one deaf and dumb, and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him, Ephpheta, that is, Be opened, and immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And he charged them that they should tell no man; but the more he charged them so much the more a great deal did they publish it, and so much the more did they wonder, saying, He hath done all things well: he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

THE Gospel of this Sunday lays before us a striking instance of the benevolent disposition of the blessed Jesus in behalf of suffering and afflicted humanity. We behold him delivering a distressed object from the two melancholy calamities of deafness and dumbness, by the benignant interposition of his miraculous power. This miraculous power he was induced to exercise on the present occasion, at the earnest entreaty of the poor man's friends. "And they bring to him one deaf and

dumb, and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him." Yet, as the narrative of this wonderful transaction relates, he did not proceed to comply with their request, till he had separated him from the crowd. He then, as we are also informed on the same authority, made use of certain external applications to the parts affected, and having lifted up his eyes to heaven, and vented in deep groans the inward emotions of his compassionate heart, he effectuated by his word an instantaneous cure. "And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him, Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right." But as on this, as well as on every other occasion, he acted from the impulse of disinterested charity, without any view to his own reputation, he enjoined on those who witnessed the miracle the strictest secrecy. "He charged them," says the sacred text, "that they should tell no man." This injunction, however, instead of preventing them from communicating to others the intelligence of the stupendous work of which they had been spectators, urged them rather, as it would seem from the words of the Gospel, to propagate it with increased ardor. "But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it." And the effect produced by this intelligence, on the minds

of all who heard it, was that of the most unqualified and enthusiastic admiration of the benevolent Thaumaturgus, which they expressed most emphatically in the following terms, with which the Gospel concludes:—"He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

The calamity with which the deaf and dumb man, whose miraculous cure by our blessed Saviour is recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday, was afflicted, may with propriety be considered as a figurative representation of similar calamities, which, in a spiritual sense, are widely diffused among mankind. Every child of Adam may be said, in reality, in a spiritual acceptation, to bring with him into the world a natural impediment to the exercise of the faculties of hearing and of speaking. Now that impediment is sin, which he has contracted by his descent from the common father of the human race. To hear spiritually, is to be inwardly sensible of the voice of God speaking to the heart, through the efficacious influence of a lively faith: and to speak, in like manner, is to manifest outwardly the effects of that divine voice, by a general tenor of conduct conformable to its suggestions. Now to the exercise of these two faculties, sin, as long as it is in possession of the soul, opposes, by its very nature, an insurmountable obstruction. For how can that person have the power of hearing the voice of God speaking to his heart through the efficacious influence,

of a lively faith, or how can he be supposed to speak from that influence, whilst all his faculties are held in subjection to the control of sin, which is essentially hostile to whatever may be subservient to the glory of God, or the salvation of man? Hence are infants, like the deaf and dumb man in the Gospel, brought by their friends to the same spiritual physician, that by him they may be delivered from those deplorable disorders, which their hereditary guilt has entailed upon them. This spiritual physician is not indeed visibly present. But he is present to the eye of faith; and he acts by the instrumentality of his ministers, whom he has appointed to discharge their functions in his name; who, having performed over the infants brought to them, ceremonies similar to those which Jesus made use of in the cure of the deaf and dumb man brought to him, remove from their souls, by the water of regeneration, that original guilt, which is the cause of the disorders under which they labor, and thus render them capable of exerting in due season the unobstructed powers of their renovated minds.

Unfortunately, however, the original distemper of which they are cured by the waters of regeneration, besides that general weakness which it leaves in the soul, gives also to its feelings a corrupt propensity, which, if not duly checked, is apt to raise fresh obstacles to the sound of God's voice speaking inwardly to their hearts, and thus to renew that spiritual deafness and dumbness

which mark their birth. The morbid effects of this lamentable bias of the inclinations of the human heart, are clearly discernible in that diversity of passions which are clamorous for indulgence. And those passions, while they are permitted to prevail, oppose unavoidably an insuperable obstacle to the voice of heaven. For how is the voice of heaven to be heard amidst the din occasioned by these turbulent inmates? Or how, if the former be heard, can it be expected to be attended to, when the latter have succeeded in establishing in the affections so deep an interest in their favor? No, my friends, this cannot be. In vain will the divine accents of God's celestial voice be addressed to the soul, whilst the passions are suffered to exercise over it their baneful influence. In vain will all the transcendant glories of the heavenly Jerusalem be described to the imagination in the most glowing colors, if an insatiable desire of worldly honors and distinctions be predominant in the breast. In vain will the accumulated treasures of that rich and secure repository "where neither rust nor moth consumeth, nor thieves break through and steal," be displayed to the view of him whose mind is violently and exclusively directed to the acquisition of earthly riches. In vain will the pure joys, the chaste delights, the boundless satisfactions of an unseen state of existence, be exhibited to men immersed in the gratification of their sensual appetites. For either, like the unfortunate man in the

Gospel, they will be completely deaf to such representations, or (which is much the same thing) they will be insensible to their allurements. They cannot yield to the attractions of heaven, whilst the corrupt principles which they harbor within them, compel them in a manner to gravitate to the earth. They cannot be sensible to the charms of truth and virtue, whilst the meretricious blandishments of error and of vice, have such ascendancy over them. And the voice of the great God, whatever tone it may assume in their regard, whether it speak to them in words of terror, or in the soft language of tender expostulation, or in the encouraging terms of the most animating promises, makes as little impression upon their feelings, as would "the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal." "For the sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God. For it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined." (1 COR. c. ii. v. 14.)

And as, like the unhappy man in the Gospel, they are spiritually deaf, so, like him also, are they spiritually dumb. For *they* surely may with propriety be pronounced to be spiritually dumb, who, in consequence of their spiritual deafness, not having the word of Christ impressed upon their hearts, are seldom or never known to open their lips in the praises of God, or the edification of their neighbour. "Let the word of Christ," says the Apostle, "dwell in you abundantly in all wis-

dom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God." (COLOS. c. iii. v. 16.) How, in reality, can they be supposed to employ their tongues in adoring and praising the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who, being deaf to his divine calls, seldom or never make him the object of their thoughts, who are not accustomed to reflect on his adorable perfections, and whose minds are constantly occupied by the world? What tributes of thanksgiving can they be expected to offer to the throne of his Majesty, who are not wont to recognise, in the blessing which they enjoy, the gratuitous effects of his unbounded beneficence? Or what supplications for mercy, grace, and salvation, can *they* be imagined to present to his compassionate tenderness, who have no conception of the inestimable value of those supreme objects of the Christian's hope? As little can they be thought to endeavour, by words of edification, to promote the eternal interests of their neighbour. What are the eternal interests of their neighbour to *them*? They are totally heedless of their own salvation. How then can they have any regard for the salvation of their neighbour? If they open to him their lips, it is only to speak to him of worldly things of incomparably less importance. What do I say? It is to amuse him, perhaps, or to gratify their own malice, at the expense of another's reputation; or by distilling into his ears the poison of their loose or

impious discourse, to efface from his mind every principle of morality and religion. Eloquent in advocating the interests of the passions, they are dumb as the man who is the subject of this day's Gospel, when the infinitely more important concern of their neighbour's salvation demands their exertions.

Deplorable truly is the condition of those who have the misfortune to be afflicted with these spiritual maladies. And every sincere and faithful Christian, who feels, as he should do, for the calamities of his fellow-creatures, will imitate the *friends* of the deaf and dumb man in the Gospel, by using at least his utmost endeavours to bring them to Christ, that they may be cured of their disorders. This, however, he will do, not by the violence of external force, (for that will not succeed) but by the mild influence of friendly admonition, by the persuasive language of pious and virtuous example, and by the still more efficacious means of earnest supplications to Christ for their deliverance. "And they besought him," says the Gospel, "to lay his hands upon him." But as Jesus did not effectuate the cure of the deaf and dumb man till he had taken him aside from the multitude, so they who are anxious for the removal of the spiritual deafness and dumbness of their brethren, should strive to prevail upon them to retire occasionally from the hurry and bustle of worldly occupations, and to devote themselves to serious meditation on the paramount interests of eternity,

in the solitude of retirement. There penetrated with remorse, from the feeling consciousness of their inward guilt, affrighted by the terrors of God's avenging judgments, yet moved, at the same time, by the cheering consideration of his mercy to repentant sinners, to hope for pardon, they will become fit subjects for the medicinal operations of the great physician of their souls. Then will that great physician of their souls, by the infusion of his holy spirit into their hearts, put as it were his fingers into their ears, and touch their tongues. Then, by the efficacy of his authoritative ephpheta, will he remove that spiritual deafness and dumbness under which they labor. "And looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him, ephpheta, that is, be opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right." No sooner will they have recovered the free use of those spiritual faculties of which they had been deprived by their criminal gratifications, than they will immediately proceed to bring them into action. They will have recourse without delay to the ministers of religion, "in whom God," to use the language of the Apostle, "has placed the word of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ." (2 COR. c. v. v. 19, 20.) And as by their docility in listening to their pious exhortations they will practically evince the reality of the cure of their spiritual deafness, so will they manifest their deliverance from the not less lamentable malady of spiritual dumbness, by the undis-

guised confession of their sinful transgressions. Thus, by the gracious assistance of heaven, will you have the satisfaction of witnessing the happy result of your charitable interposition.

But that the success of your efforts in these laudable undertakings may not be defeated by obstacles opposed to it in your own conduct,—that the persons, for the cure of whose spiritual maladies you express an anxiety, may not have occasion to recommend your own to your consideration, before you think of proposing remedies to those of others,—that they may not be induced to say to you, in the language of holy writ ;—“ Physician cure thyself,” it is highly important that you should examine with impartiality the state of your own souls, in order to ascertain if some degree of that spiritual deafness and dumbness, which you observe in others, may not justly be imputed to yourselves ; and if it should, to adopt such measures as may be proper to remove it. Often, my friends, does the Almighty address himself to your souls ; often are the accents of his heavenly voice to be heard distinctly by every unobstructed and attentive ear. Often does he speak to you by his own written word, by the voice of his ministers, by books of religious instruction, or by the secret inspirations of his Holy Spirit. But do all these various communications of his holy will, make upon our minds corresponding impressions ? Do you listen to them with that awful attention which they imperiously demand ?

Do they awaken within you a just sense of the important truths which they fail not to convey? Do they stimulate you to a comformable regulation of your conduct? Or may not the observation, made by Christ, on the inefficacy of his words, on the minds of the Jewish people, be in some measure applicable also to you,—that, “hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.” (*MATT. c. xiii. v. 13.*) Frequently, also, my friends, do occasions present themselves, when, to be silent, argues some sort of spiritual impediment in the free exercise of the faculty of speech. Such occasions, you must, all of you, no doubt, recollect to have oftentimes occurred. How often have you heard the adorable name of God blasphemed, his religion reviled, and his oracles made the sport of profane jests? How often have you heard the false principles of worldly wisdom set up in opposition to the truths of revelation, the maxims of the world opposed to those of the Gospel, its corruptions vindicated, and its practices applauded? How often have you heard the characters of your absent neighbours slandered, crimes assigned to them of which they were guiltless, their failings exaggerated, and their virtues misrepresented? And how have you conducted yourselves in these conjunctures? Have you, with the bold, fearless, and unshaken firmness of honest Christians, stepped forth, the intrepid champions of God and man, the generous defenders of the sacred rights of truth, of virtue, and humanity; or have you suffered your apprehensions

of sinking in the estimation of unprincipled men, whose good opinion is not worth possessing, to impose silence upon your tongues, when all the most powerful motives, calculated to influence a Christian heart, demanded their most active and strenuous exertions? Should you, upon examination, perceive yourselves subject to the defects which I have specified, in the exercise of your faculties of hearing and of speaking, you will then do well to prostrate yourselves, with humility, before the divine physician of your souls, to beseech him, by his grace, to put, as it were, his fingers into your ears, and to touch your tongues, and thus to enable you to listen, henceforth, with attention, to his holy word, and “to confess him before men, that he may also confess you before your Father who is in Heaven.”

It is stated, in the Gospel, that when the blessed Jesus had, by his divine power, restored the faculty of hearing and of speaking to the deaf and dumb man, he enjoined, both on him, and on his friends, the most profound secrecy, respecting the miracle which he had just performed. “And he charged them,” says the Gospel, “that they should tell no man.” Thus did he exemplify in his conduct that sublime lesson of pure and disinterested goodness, which he had before inculcated in his Sermon on the Mount :—“Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them ; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in Heaven.” (MATT. c. vi. v. 1.) An ad-

monition which cannot be too strongly impressed upon your minds, when you are engaged in the performance of any good work, that its merit may not be adulterated by the alloy of vanity. The injunction, however, of secrecy, which was laid by Christ on the deaf and dumb man and his friends, instead of being complied with on their part, operated, it appears, on them, as an additional incentive to give to the miracle a greater publicity. For the Gospel relates,—“that the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it.” Thus did they express, even by their act of disobedience, the irresistible approbation inherent in the human breast of that divine maxim contained in the Gospel of last Sunday, that, “as every man who exalteth himself shall be humbled, so he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.” But although the object which these men had in view, in giving as wide a diffusion as possible to the report of the miracle which Jesus had performed, was good and laudable, though unquestionably they were actuated by a sincere and ardent zeal to raise his character in the estimation of the world, yet they were not justified in the adoption of the measure to which, for that purpose, they had recourse on the present occasion. For as they were not chosen to be the trumpeters of his fame, but were forbidden, on the contrary, to spread it abroad, it became them to submit, instead of acting counter to his rigorous prohibitions. Let the remembrance, therefore, my friends,

of the following most important truths, be imprinted in indelible characters on your minds, that no end, however noble and excellent it may be, will authorize the employment of unlawful means for the attainment of it; that the zeal which may stimulate you to resort to such means, though honest and well-intended, is nevertheless a misguided zeal; that, to use the language of the Apostle, it is not "a zeal according to knowledge," and that consequently it should be checked, and not encouraged, by every faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

And if, after having been deaf to the voice of God, and dumb, when his glory, or the interests of your neighbour, should have induced you to speak, you should experience, like the deaf and dumb man in the Gospel, the complete restoration of your spiritual faculties, through the efficacious interposition of the physician of your souls; or should you, like his friends who brought him to Jesus, be instrumental in procuring for others that inestimable blessing, do not go about, like the men in the Gospel, who, contrary to the strict injunction of our blessed Saviour, published abroad the report of his miracle; do not you, I say, go about, like them, proclaiming to the world the wonders which it has pleased your Redeemer to work in your behalf, or through your means. For there is danger lest vanity may instigate, in some degree, though imperceptibly perhaps, to such a mode of proceeding. But leave to its effects the

task of manifesting to all who may behold them the complete cure which may be operated by him upon yourselves or others. Thus will all who witness those effects be disposed to exclaim, like the men in the Gospel, "He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." And thus, preserving that kind of secrecy which will guard you against the influence of vain glory, you will, without ostentation, "make your light shine before men, who, seeing your good works, will glorify your Father who is in heaven; and your Father who seeth in secret, will, as your blessed Saviour has himself assured you, reward you openly."

SERMON XXXVI.

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE VIRTUE OF FRATERNAL CHARITY.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, x. v. 23-37. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them; and behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But he said to him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? He answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself; and he said to him, Thou has answered rightly; this do, and thou shalt live. But he willing to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead; and it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him; and the next day he took out two pieces of money, and gave to the host, and said, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee. Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbour to him that fell among robbers? But he said, He that shewed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him, Go and do thou in like manner.

OUR blessed Saviour Jesus Christ had just addressed his disciples on the happiness of their lot

in beholding in him the accomplishment of the prophecies which, at different periods, had been delivered to their forefathers, respecting the promised Messiah, and in hearing from his own lips the doctrines of eternal life which had been the special objects of the most ardent desires of prophets and of kings in ancient times,—when, behold! a person learned in the law came forward, and tempting him, as the Gospel expresses it, that is to say, wishing to put his wisdom to a trial, or to draw perhaps an answer from him on which he might ground an accusation against him, propounded to him the following question :—“ What must I do to possess eternal life ?” Jesus, however, with his usual sagacity, instead of making a direct reply to this insidious question, referred him to that law in which he was supposed to be eminently skilled, for satisfaction on the subject. “ But he said to him, what is written in the law ?” To which the man instantly replied :—“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself.” To this answer our blessed Saviour gave, without delay, his unqualified approbation ; and assured him, that should his conduct be conformable to it, he would unquestionably obtain that everlasting life which was the professed object of his pursuit. “ And he said to him, Thou hast answered right ; this do, and thou shalt live.” But as the term neighbour is undoubtedly sus-

ceptible of various significations, according to the greater or less degree of latitude in which it is considered, and as the Jews limited the acceptance of it to persons of their own nation and religion, the man wishing on this ground to justify himself, desired to know from Jesus in what sense *he* understood it. “ But he, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour ? ” And not only may he have wished to justify himself, in opposition to what he must have been aware would in all probability be the decision of Jesus, of whose liberal principles of universal philanthropy he could not but be apprised, but he may have sought, moreover, an opportunity of condemning him for avowing, on a doctrinal point of such vast importance, an opinion at variance with the general sentiment of the nation. But mark, my friends, mark attentively, the consummate wisdom with which this great master of the human heart acquitted himself on so trying an occasion. He did not return a direct reply to the individual who put the question, because he well knew, that on a mind disposed as his was, it would not be productive of any good effect. But he proposed to him a case of that description which compelled him at once to condemn himself whom he sought to justify, and to justify Jesus whom he sought to condemn. The case was this. An unfortunate Jew, who was proceeding in his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, was assailed by robbers. These ruffians, having stripped him of his garments, and barba-

rously wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead. Two individuals of the same nation, and they too ministers of the same religion, travelling afterwards accidentally on the same road, beheld him in this deplorable condition ; and, although they perceived him to be a countryman of their own, and a worshipper too, like themselves, of the great Jehova in the temple of Jerusalem, they unfeelingly passed him by, and continued their journey. At length a Samaritan makes his appearance ; and, no sooner does he descry the distressed sufferer, than he advances towards him, and is filled with compassion at the sad spectacle of human wretchedness which presents itself to his view. He recognizes not indeed in him the face of a countryman, or of a worshipper on mount Garizim ; he observes him, on the contrary, to be his inveterate enemy. (For the Jews and Samaritans were at that time notorious for their mutual hostility.) Yet he does not abandon him. No. He discharges towards him every kind office of humanity and beneficence. He dresses tenderly his bleeding wounds, places him upon his own beast, conveys him carefully to a neighbouring inn, makes him there the object of his personal attention, and on his departure the day following, giving to the landlord such small sum of money as his present convenience will allow, he earnestly recommends him to his particular care, and promises, at the same time, to defray, on his return, any farther expences which might possibly be in-

curred. Having stated this case to the insidious querist, Jesus then, with the utmost confidence, called upon him to say, which of these three persons had, in his judgment, performed the duty of a neighbour to the poor wounded and helpless traveller. "Which," said he, "of the three in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?" Unable to resist the force of so powerful an appeal to the feelings of his heart, he decided, without hesitation, in favor of the Samaritan. "But he said, He that shewed mercy to him. Do thou then," replied Jesus, "go, and do in like manner." And, whenever thou shalt see a fellow-creature in distress, be his country or religion what it may, remember that he is a man, and therefore thy neighbour. Such, my friends, is the enlarged and comprehensive nature of the love of our neighbour inculcated in the parable which I have chosen for the subject of this day's instruction; and in the discussion of which, I hope to make it appear, that by exercising the virtue of fraternal charity, you will promote both your temporal and eternal welfare.

Of the advantages derived, even in our present state, from an assiduous cultivation of this virtue of the love of our neighbour, an attentive consideration of our common wants is well calculated to convince us. There is no individual, however great his personal resources, who will hesitate to acknowledge that they are by no means adequate to the satisfaction of all his demands. In every

stage and condition in life, from the cradle to the grave, in affluence and in poverty, man stands in need of the assistance of man. But he, who in the general tenor of his behaviour manifests a friendly disposition towards others, and a readiness, as far as his circumstances will allow, to be serviceable to them, will not fail to experience from others a corresponding return. The friend of all mankind, he is universally befriended. In his undertakings and engagements, he bears along with him the good wishes of all who know him. All take an interest in his prosperity and welfare. If obstacles of any kind obstruct his advancement, the hands of all are spontaneously stretched forth to aid him in their removal. If he rise, it is amidst the acclamations of rejoicing multitudes; and if he fall, he falls at least lamented.

Another argument in support of the expediency of cultivating the virtue of fraternal charity is suggested by the consideration of our own failings. Perfection does not belong to human nature. Whoever will be at the pains to examine himself impartially, must necessarily be convinced that he is not exempt from defects. In some, they abound more; in other, less: but no one is without them. The brightest characters have their specks, which they are desirous of concealing; the soundest have their vulnerable parts, which they wish to defend. Exercise the virtue of charity towards your neighbour, and your desires in these respects will not fail to be accomplished. The mantle you throw

over the imperfections of others, will answer the purpose of concealing your own. The shield held forth in their defence, will be a protection also to yourselves against the darts of malevolence. So captivating, indeed, are the charms of this lovely virtue, that the practisers of it, though otherwise addicted to the grossest excesses, are generally treated by men with the most indulgent lenity; whilst those, on the other hand, who are regardless of it, however great their other merits may be, are usually judged with unmitigated severity. So true it is, that charity, even in the eyes of men, may be said to cover a multitude of sins. Yes, indeed, my friends, if you will be careful, at all times, to regulate your conduct on the grand principle of acting towards others as you would wish others to act towards you, you may rest assured that, however great may be the propensity of the human heart to degrade and vilify, it will be checked in your favor by a powerful restraint from feelings of an opposite tendency, which it is in the nature of Christian philanthropy to excite. Esteem, love, gratitude, all will conspire to repress its malignant influence. It will not be in the power of the most consummate malice to do you an injury. Should any one however, be found so unnaturally base, so devoid of every humane and generous feeling, as, notwithstanding your strict observance of this rule, to attempt to defame you, champions will not be wanting who will step forward in your defence, vindicate your

injured name, shew forth your deserts in their genuine colors, and frustrate the efforts of the most spiteful malignity.

Moreover, my friends, in our present state of existence, we are beset with evils of various kinds. Exemption from pain and sorrow is a privilege which, in this vale of tears, it is not given to mortals to enjoy. Of the waters of bitterness all are condemned to drink. But, although to escape entirely the calamities incident to human nature, be out of our power, yet a man of kind and philanthropic disposition fails not to experience, from a variety of circumstances, a mitigation of them. For place this benevolent friend of the human race, in any of those trying situations of life which fall to the lot of the children of woe—let him be stretched out on the bed of sickness—let him be oppressed with grief, tortured with pain, or debilitated by infirmity: no sooner has report made known his distressed state, than all are eager, by expressions of solicitude, to manifest their concern; all are anxious, by their charitable exertions, to impart consolation, and administer relief. How grateful must it be to the good man's feelings to witness in others the engaging practice of the same kind offices which it has been his own delight to perform; to find himself the object of their affection and care—to listen to the soothing accents of comfort which fall from their lips—to behold the tears of sympathy trembling in every eye, and the anxiety

expressed by all to contribute, by every means in their power, to the alleviation of his sorrows, and the supply of his wants! Oh! my friends, from testimonies like these, of affection and esteem, which he has the satisfaction to experience, he feels a secret pleasure spring up within him, his languishing spirit is refreshed, and his sorrows, if not entirely removed, are at least tempered and assuaged.

Nor is that all. In the most flourishing condition of life, the effects of fraternal charity are also highly beneficial. Admired talents, splendid achievements, brilliant success frequently provoke malignant passions. Men are not fond of being made to feel their own inferiority. They hate the blaze by which they conceive their own lustre to be obscured. They endeavour to cast a shade upon it. Those with whom they are unable to rise to an equality, they endeavour to bring down to their own level. But when the glare of personal endowments, or renowned deeds, is tempered and softened by the mild radiance of Christian Philanthropy—when the expansion of benevolence keeps pace with the elevation of prosperity, then is every unfriendly emotion extinguished in the breast of the admiring beholder—envy drops her shafts—jealousy loses her venom—the voice of obloquy is hushed, and every countenance is bright with joy. In short, my friends, the benevolent man, when raised to the most exalted station in life, does not only disarm the malice of

his enemies, he diffuses happiness around him ; he may be said to resemble the sun shedding his benign influence on the earth, in the vernal season, when herbs, trees, flowers, the animal as well as the vegetable creation, all nature, in a word, appears to exult beneath his exhilarating beams. Permit me also to add, that as the distresses of adversity are most severely felt by the solitary mourner, so the advantages of prosperity are enjoyed, on the contrary, in their greatest perfection, by a man of social and benevolent disposition. In vain does fortune smile on our undertakings—in vain does she load us with her choicest gifts. Her smiles and her gifts are unable to make her favorites happy. Tell me not of riches—tell me not of pleasures, dignities, honors. Are riches a remedy to the corrosion of anxious cares ? Can pleasures prevent the languor of a palled appetite ? Or when did there exist a monarch who could rest satisfied in the solitary contemplation of his own dignity ! Oh no ! Shew me a man of a benevolent heart, of a heart that expands itself abroad—of a heart that pants for the general weal and happiness of his fellow-creatures, whom he regards universally as his brethren and friends ; shew me such an one. Let him, if you please, abound in wealth—let him be raised to the pinnacle of human grandeur—let his fame be commensurate to the ambition of the most aspiring. Here, indeed, I discover a being who will derive, from his exaltation, the most exquisite satisfaction ; not because he is

wealthy—not because he is exalted and renowned—but because he has it in his power to indulge more freely the benevolent propensity of his soul—because he possesses the means of concurring more largely to the general good of society. By his abundance in the gifts of fortune, he is enabled to convey relief into the dreary mansions of poverty and distress—to be a father to the orphan—and “to make the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” By the pre-eminence of distinguished rank, he is qualified to procure protection to modest merit; and by uniting with the example of virtuous conduct, the brilliancy of splendid reputation, he is provided with the means of stimulating his admirers to the pursuit of their own true happiness, in the imitation of his virtues. If therefore, you have any regard for your interest, even in this life, it is evident, from what has hitherto been said, that you cannot more effectually consult it than by cultivating the virtue of brotherly affection.

But not only are you to consider the love of your neighbour as recommended to you by views of worldly interest;—you are also to regard it as a great and momentous duty, as a duty of strict and indispensable obligation, and consequently as conducive to your everlasting interests. There is no commandment more clearly announced than that which enjoins the important duty of fraternal charity. It is proclaimed by nature in a language accommodated to the meanest capacity; it

is engraved in characters which nothing can obliterate on the tablets of our hearts ; and it is enforced with peculiar energy in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we look abroad on the works of creation, and contemplate seriously their beneficial effects, we are necessarily impressed with a deep conviction of the immensity of God's benevolence towards the creatures of his hand. Permit me then to ask you if it be possible to conceive that our bountiful Creator would have manifested his liberality towards us in so eminent a degree, had he not intended to promote our comfort? Such then being, in our regard, the evident design of the adorable Author of our existence, he certainly must will the means by which that design may be accomplished ; and as the virtue of fraternal charity must be acknowledged to contribute most effectually to this purpose, we are consequently to conclude, that, by neglecting to cultivate it, we are not only the enemies of our own interests, but that, rebels against Heaven, we counteract the benevolent views of the Eternal himself.

If after having contemplated the works of Nature, you consult inwardly your own bosoms, you will there discover demonstrative proofs of the obligation which you are under of loving one another. Compassion, affection, sympathy, are sentiments natural to the heart of man. Now, what are these but so many imperious mandates, enjoining forcibly this most amiable of virtues?

When you have yielded to the impulse of any of these, your inbred feelings in the performance of kind and generous actions, pray, tell me, my friends, in what manner are you then affected? Do not the most delicious sensations spring up within you, and give an additional relish to every other enjoyment of your existence? Are not peace, serenity, and content of mind, the constant attendants on a friendly disposition towards your fellow-creatures? Is not such a disposition the unavoidable object of your approbation and esteem? And, on the contrary, does not the consciousness of having resisted the benevolent impressions of your nature give birth to the uneasiness of self-reproach? When, instead of cherishing the virtuous quality of brotherly affection, you permit your hearts to be ulcerated by anger, hatred, revenge, or any other unsocial passion inimical to its operations, are you not a prey to the most tormenting disquietude, agitation, and anguish, destructive of the soul's repose, and rendering man a torment to himself? Do you not condemn in others these uncharitable excesses? And what are we hence to conclude? Why, that he who fashioned the heart of man is ever proclaiming to it, through the medium of its feelings, his own divine law : Man, love thy neighbour.

Such, my friends, has been universally, and at all times, the common voice of nature and of feeling, in inculcating the virtue of fraternal charity. But it was reserved to the religion of Jesus to

expose it to the world in its full perfection. It is there exhibited more sublime in its nature, more durable in its source, more comprehensive in its extent, and exemplified in the conduct of the most perfect model. "If any man," (they are the words of St. John) "if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." What an exalted idea of the virtue of fraternal charity is here conveyed to our minds! identified with the love of the Creator himself, it is raised to the dignity of the most august of virtues. In what more noble employment, in reality, can we possibly be engaged, than in elevating the affections of our souls to that transcendently great and adorable Being, who comprises in his very essence every perfection in its highest degree of excellence? But if our love for mankind be regulated by the dictates of the Christian law,—if in conformity with those dictates the love of God be the original source from which it emanates, if it be exercised under the influence of that divine principle, it then assumes this elevated character so dignified in itself, and so honorable to our nature. Charity, thus ennobled, becomes incomparably more firm, more constant and permanent. When it is merely the result of the natural propensity of our feelings, it is then, from various causes, perpetually in

danger of being extinguished, from the collision, for instance, of opposite interests, from jealousy, envy, ambition, disgust and a multiplicity of untoward casualties, which are liable to take place in human affairs. But when, being rooted in the love of God, it proceeds from a principle of obedience to his divine commands, it is then no longer exposed to the same accidents. Men may change, our interests may vary, our feelings may be wounded, but the law of the Lord must ever remain eternally the same. To it, therefore,—to this divine and unalterable law,—actuated by that charity which the religion of Jesus prescribes, we shall be ever ready to sacrifice all the disorderly inclinations of flesh and blood, our interests, our passions, our unfriendly prepossessions, and every other cause or occasion, of antipathies and dissensions, so hateful in themselves, and so pernicious in their consequences. More extensive, also, and enlarged is the virtue of fraternal charity, when established on the broad basis of divine love. It clasps, in the expansion of its wide embrace, the inhabitants of all countries. Every individual of the human race, of whatever age, sex, or condition,—of whatever description, or sect, in religious worship, enemies and friends, sinners as well as saints, all are clasped in the number of God's creatures, upon whom his sun is equally made to shine, and have therefore their claim upon us for the tribute of our affection.

Such, my friends, is the sublime, durable, and

extensive character of brotherly affection, as displayed to our view, and ordered to be cherished in the Gospel of Jesus Christ: and of this our divine Saviour has left us in his own conduct, during his mortal life, a most perfect model. Oh! for a seraph's tongue to describe, in words of fire, that intense, active, and comprehensive charity of the blessed Jesus towards mankind, and to inflame thereby your hearts with a similar ardor in behalf of your fellow-creatures. What happy effects might I not dare to expect from such a representation? But, alas! my friends, I am here compelled to acknowledge my incapacity. So bright an original defies all description. But, then, what a striking and melancholy contrast to this incomparable prototype of the most perfect charity is exhibited to us in the conduct of those who cherish in their hearts implacable feelings of hatred and resentment, whose minds are perpetually haunted by the remembrance of injuries, real or imaginary, stimulating them to revenge,—who are so easily provoked, so averse to forgiveness, so sharp-sighted in the detection of their neighbours' faults, so rash in their judgment, so precipitate in their condemnations! Alas, my friends, had our Divine Redeemer acted towards us with the same severity which distinguishes the conduct of these persons towards their fellow-creatures, what would have become of us? “My dearest,” exclaims the amiable disciple of love, “if God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” Since, there-

fore, my friends, our interest, both in time and eternity, is so deeply involved in the practice of the virtue of fraternal charity, let us cherish and cultivate it to the utmost of our power. Let us enter this day into a solemn compact of mutual agreement, harmony, and friendship, banishing for ever from amongst us every source of enmity and dissension, anger, hatred, malice, jealousy, envy, rash judgment, detraction, and calumny,—make it, in future, the study of your lives to assist, comfort, and edify one another. In our connexions with mankind, remembering that we are men, let us be careful to make every due allowance for the imperfections of our common nature. Remembering that we are Christians, let us constantly endeavour to breathe, at all times, the genuine spirit of the vocation to which we are called, and to speak its language. Particularly, my friends, let me caution you not to permit a passionate or misguided zeal for the cause of religion, to hurry you into excesses which religion condemns: recollect that charity is the very soul of religion, and that not confined to the sole members of your own communion, but extended universally to every individual of the race of man. Refute, by your comportment, the odious charge of uncharitableness, which, with not less injustice than illiberality, has frequently been fixed on the Catholic name, and prove to your dissenting brethren, of every denomination, that the principles of your religious creed, far from restraining the

benevolent sentiments of humanity, have, on the contrary, an admirable tendency to enlarge, strengthen, and sanctify them. Thus will you manifest in your lives the distinguishing mark by which you may be known to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, whose charity surpasseth all comprehension, and through whose infinite merits and grace we are encouraged to look forward with humble confidence to the future possession of that eternal inheritance purchased for us at the price of all his blood.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE SPIRITUAL LEPROSY OF SIN.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xvii. v. 11-19. At that time, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee; and as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. Whom when he saw he said, Go, shew yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks; and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. And he said to him, Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole.

WE have in the Gospel of this Sunday an interesting account of ten persons cured of the leprosy, by the miraculous power of the Redeemer of mankind. The leprosy was a disorder of a very painful and loathsome description. They, who amongst the Jews had the misfortune to be afflicted with it, were, by the law of Moses, secluded from the society of the rest of the nation, nor were they readmitted to the advantages and comforts of social intercourse, till, after having submitted themselves to the inspection of the priests, and having been

pronounced by them to be sane, they had been purified, by the performance of certain religious rites, from such legal defilement as they were considered to have incurred. Such were the character and consequences of the disease under which the ten unfortunate men labored, who, as the Gospel states, met Jesus on his entrance into a particular city, as he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, in his way to Jerusalem. Their reverence, however, of his person, and the consciousness of their uncleanness, kept them at a respectful distance from him, and thus situated, they presented to him, in a strain of great humility, their earnest petition for the removal of their distemper. "Jesus," said they, "master, have mercy on us." Nor was their petition presented in vain, for no sooner did this compassionate physician behold them than he was immediately moved to comply with their request; wishing, however, at the same time, to afford them an opportunity of manifesting their faith, and desirous of evincing his respect for the law of Moses, which, as he had himself observed, "he came not to destroy, but to fulfil," he ordered them previously, in compliance with its injunctions, to shew themselves to the priests. "Go," said he, "shew yourselves to the priests." The poor men, though sensible that they were not then in a fit condition to be subjected to examination, followed nevertheless, without demur, the directions which Jesus had given them; when, behold! as they were on their

journey, they had the satisfaction to experience a perfect cure. "And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed." One of the number, and only one, and that one too a Samaritan, returned to Jesus ; and penetrated with a deep sense of the benefit which he had received, prostrated himself before him, confessed him to be God, as the text may be thought to imply, and poured forth to him, as to his most gracious benefactor, the grateful sentiments of his heart. "And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice, glorified God, and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks, and this man was a Samaritan." Satisfied with the testimony of gratitude which this good man had exhibited, Jesus now released him from his humble posture, and gently dismissed him, assuring him, at the same time, that the blessing he had received, had been bestowed upon him in reward of his faith. "And he said to him, Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole." Yet he could not forbear intimating his inward displeasure at the absence of the other nine, which seemed to indicate a want of that proper feeling which the magnitude of the favor conferred upon them should have excited in their breasts. "And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

The whole of this day's Gospel, which I have

thus briefly expounded to you, is pregnant with matter of useful instruction. For there is not a single circumstance in it which will not admit of a spiritual application. The leprosy with which the ten individuals were infected, is a lively representation of the leprosy of sin, which the souls of men are apt, alas ! too frequently to contract ; and the latter, like the former of these disorders, is also of a most painful and loathsome description. Painful, my friends, it unquestionably is. For pain is not to be imagined to arise solely from a disordered state of the animal economy. No. There are pains of the mind as well as of the body, and those too of a very distressing nature. Grief, anxiety, shame, terror, must certainly be allowed to be painful affections of the mind, and when they exist, in a violent degree, to be productive of extreme anguish. “ A wounded spirit,” says the wise man, “ who can bear ? ” But of all the wounds to which the spirit of a man is exposed, there is none, perhaps, so severe as that of remorse, which is inflicted on it by sin. Remorse may be said to be in reality a complication of all those bitter emotions of the soul, which are the natural effects of conscious guilt ; and this, the most excruciating of mental torments, the man who labors under a guilty conscience is condemned to suffer, unless, by a terrible judgment of God, his heart be rendered callous to every good impression ; for in whatever direction he turns his thoughts, he meets with nothing but what is cal-

culated to inspire him with the most melancholy reflections, and to destroy his quiet. If he look into his own breast, he there beholds a subject of unavoidable self-reproach ; for he sees in it a violation of those principles of rectitude implanted originally in his nature, and with which, to use the words of St. Paul, “ he is still delighted, according to the inward man.” (Rom. c. vii. v. 22.) If he open that inspired volume of the written law, which contains rules for the regulation of his conduct, he there reads his own condemnation, since he cannot but plead guilty at the bar of his own conscience of an infringement of that celestial code. If he extend his views beyond the grave, to that future state of existence, in which he is assured by truth itself, that “ it shall be rendered to every one, according to his works,” and that “ the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” he has no other prospect but that of endless misery, should death put an end to his sinful career. He knows, at the same time, that that awful event may happen at any moment ; he knows well on how precarious a tenure he holds his earthly tenement ; he is sensible too that he has incurred the displeasure of that Almighty Being on whose sovereign will his existence depends, and that the guilt in which he persists, in opposition to all the exhortations of the ministers of religion, and the secret inspirations of grace, is incessantly calling down upon his head the severity

of divine justice. Surely, my friends, it will not be denied, that these awful and tremendous considerations, which enter into the composition of remorse, must necessarily be productive of an anguish of mind abundantly sufficient to justify the assertion, that the leprosy of sin, like that of the ten lepers, which constitutes the subject of this day's Gospel, is a most painful disorder ; like it, also, it is loathsome as it is painful, for we are not to confine our ideas of beauty and deformity to objects which present themselves to our external senses. There exists in man a moral as well as a physical sense of perception ; and there are a moral beauty and a moral deformity accommodated to that moral sense. Of the former description are the virtues which adorn, and of the latter the vices which disfigure, the human character. When we contemplate, for instance, that finished portrait of our blessed Saviour, as it is delineated to us by the four evangelists, in which justice, mercy, humility, meekness, charity, and every other distinguished virtue, are so admirably blended as to leave nothing to add, nothing to retrench, nothing to transpose, or alter,—how irresistably are we captivated by its beauteous charms ! And when we reflect, on the other hand, on the picture which they have left us of his enemies, in which envy, malice, hypocrisy, inhumanity, and a variety of other vices, are commingled together in hideous disorder, how unavoidably are we affected with disgust and horror ! And yet it is

from their effects only that we are able to form our ideas of the good and bad qualities which mark respectively the characters of the virtuous and the wicked, for we cannot discern them as they exist in themselves in the internal dispositions of the heart. Since then the ideal images only of the vices of bad men, as they are reflected upon our minds from the effects which they produce upon external conduct, inspire us with such disgust and horror, think how loathsome they would appear to us, were it given to us to behold them in the soul itself, as God beholds them, in all the foulness of their intrinsic turpitude?

As the leprosy of sin, like that which is mentioned in the Gospel, is a disorder at once of a most painful and loathsome description, so may it be said also to resemble it in its consequences. For as they who among the Jews labored under this melancholy disease were cut off by the law of Moses from all communication with the rest of the community, and deprived of all the advantages and comforts of social intercourse, so they who in the Church of Christ are infected by sin with a similar malady, are shut out from all participation in those spiritual blessings which the virtuous alone are privileged to enjoy. "If," says St. John, "we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lye, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 JOHN, c. i. v. 6, 7.) They are excluded, therefore, from

the benefits of those rich treasures of heavenly grace, which Christ has lavished so profusely upon his Church, for the spiritual support, consolation, and happiness of his faithful adherents. They are aliens, as it were, in their own country. They are debarred, by their communication with the unfruitful works of darkness, from the enjoyment of the common privileges of the children of light. They have no share whatever in the choicest gifts of Heaven, for the fruition of which they are wholly disqualified. To them that clean oblation of the spotless Lamb, which is daily offered on innumerable altars, "from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof," is without profit. To them the sacraments convey no stream of sanctifying grace; to them the prayers either of the saints in heaven, or of the saints on earth, are productive of no advantage, save that, perhaps, of contributing to their deliverance from the wretchedness of their degrading condition. Such, my friends, is the character, and such are the consequences, of that spiritual leprosy, with which a soul in sin is tortured and disfigured. And there is no one, surely, infected with it, unless his feelings be reduced to a state of moral insensibility, who would not wish to be freed from so shocking a distemper.

But what must he do in order to attain the object of his wishes? What measures must he adopt in order to be released from his unhappy state? What must he do! Why let him imitate the example of the lepers, mentioned in the Gos-

pel. Like them, let him have recourse to that great Physician both of soul and body, to whom they applied successfully for relief. Let him, with lively faith, with profound humility, and with a deep sense of penitential sorrow, earnestly solicit him to compassionate his distress, and to restore health to his distempered soul. As they did, let him feelingly exclaim: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me." And should you, my friends, be conscious of being in any degree tainted with this deplorable disorder, do you also, in similar dispositions, intreat him to listen with a propitious ear to the voice of your supplication. The circumstances under which it is given to you to address him, are much more encouraging than were those under which the lepers in the Gospel presented to him their petitions. For, as the Gospel states, he was in his way to Jerusalem, and had not yet shed his blood for the redemption of mankind, when the latter implored his mercy in their behalf: and therefore, although the many instances, which no doubt had been reported to them, of the wonderful effects of his power and goodness on the afflicted and distressed, were strong inducements to apply to him for relief; yet, as they met him only accidentally upon the road, and had no knowledge of his being the Lamb of God, slain from the beginning of the world, it is impossible they should have addressed him with the same confidence which they would unquestionably have felt, had they beheld him established in a particular

situation, for the express purpose of receiving the petitions of all who might be in want ; and known him to be, moreover, that great High Priest and victim who is represented by the prophet Isaiah “ as wounded for our iniquities, as bruised for our sins, and by whose bruises we are healed.” (ISAIAH, c. liii. v. 5.) But it is not merely on the road to Jerusalem, that, like the lepers in the Gospel, *you* are permitted to have access to him. No. It is in Jerusalem itself,—it is in the Jerusalem that is above, as it is termed by St. Paul, (GAL. c. iv. v. 26) where seated on the throne of mercy, he is always ready to listen to your heartfelt supplications. Yes, my friends, there he is within the august sanctuary of the highest heavens,—Jesus the immortal, the eternal Son of God, who died for your offences, who rose again for your justification, and who is now seated at the right hand of his heavenly Father, your great high-priest, mediator, and advocate. What sin so enormous as to be incapable of pardon, when so powerful an intercessor pleads for mercy ? What leprosy so foul as not to yield to the purifying efficacy of the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb of God ? “ For if the blood of goats, and of oxen,” says the Apostle, “ and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Holy Ghost, offered himself without spot to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (HEB. ix. v. 13, 14.) Go, there-

fore, my friends,—go, all you whose consciences are in any manner disordered with the leprosy of sin, go with confidence to this Great High Priest and Physician of your souls. Prostrate yourselves before him in deep humiliation. Beseech him to have compassion on the wretchedness of your condition. Say to him, with the lepers, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us;” and you will experience, like them, the effects of his goodness in the cure of your disease.

But as Christ did not cure the lepers till he had told them to go and shew themselves to the priests, so does he require of you, as a condition of your deliverance from the leprosy of sin, that you expose, with sincerity, the state of your souls to those in whom he has placed the word of reconciliation, by an unreserved confession of your guilt. For when, as we read in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of St. John, he imparted to his Apostles, and of course to their successors, the power of forgiving sins, in the following emphatical words :—“whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained;” he then evidently made the forgiveness of sins to depend on their authoritative sentence. But how is it possible for the successors of the Apostles, the bishops and priests of the true Church of Christ, to be duly qualified to exercise this authority, which has been delegated to them, unless the state of the sinner’s conscience be submitted to their inspection? And how, if

we expect a miraculous revelation from above, (which they have no reason whatever to expect) how is the state of the sinner's conscience to be submitted to their inspection, but by his own disclosure, which plainly implies the necessity of confession? Although, therefore, such may be the intensity of your sorrow, as to purify your consciences from the guilt you may have contracted, yet that circumstance does not exempt you from the obligation of confessing it to the ministers of Christ, which is strikingly intimated by the conduct of the lepers, who, even after they had experienced the cure of their leprosy, in consequence of their faith, still proceeded, in conformity with the injunction which had been laid upon them, to shew themselves to the priests. Let not any human consideration, then, deter you from doing that which, by divine appointment, is requisite for the restoration of your spiritual health. You do not hesitate to disclose, without disguise, the particulars of your complaint to the physicians of your bodies, when you labor under any corporal disorder: why then will you not do the same to the physicians of your souls, when you labor under any spiritual disorder? Is not the health of your immortal spirits of incalculably greater consequence than that of your perishable bodies? Remember also, my friends, that the ministers of Christ, to whom you are commanded to reveal the secrets of your hearts, are bound, by all that is most sacred in religion, to confine such secrets within

the repositories of their own breasts, to which they have been confided. Nor are you to imagine, that their acquaintance with your failings will contribute in any manner to lessen you in their esteem. Alas! my friends, they are too well acquainted with their own defects, not to make every candid allowance for those of others. They forget not that they are men; and therefore they have no pretensions to immunity from the common infirmities incident to human nature. The good dispositions of your hearts evinced by your sincere and humble confession, will combine with the confidence reposed in them, to raise, instead of depressing you, in their estimation, and to call forth all the ardor of their zeal for the promotion of your best and dearest interests.

When, of the ten who had been cured of the leprosy, Jesus beheld but one returning to testify his gratitude for so great a blessing, and that one too a Samaritan, he is stated by the Evangelist to have expressed the sense which he entertained in the following terms of implied reproach;—"Were there not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger." May it not hence be fairly inferred that nine parts out of ten, of those who are cleansed from the leprosy of sin, by the sacrament of penance, are apt, too frequently, to be deficient in gratitude for so signal a manifestation of the divine mercy in their behalf. But, without pretending to ascertain with exact preci-

sion, the proportionate number of those who are chargeable with ingratitude in this respect, I certainly may be allowed, without subjecting myself to the imputation of rashness, to pronounce it to be very considerable. Suffer not, my friends, a charge of so odious a description to be justly preferred against you. Let it not be said of you that you are insensible to the indulgence of the best, the tenderest, the most affectionate of Fathers, and that you have basely derived from his facility in pardoning, an additional motive for the repetition of your offences. Imitate rather the laudable conduct of the grateful Samaritan. Manifest, like him, your heartfelt thankfulness to your Redeemer, by your unremitting assiduity and ardor in his service. Shew it by your firm and intrepid defence of his holy religion, when assailed, at any time, by the contemptible sophistry and profane sneers of infidels and libertines. And, above all, exhibit it in a way which will be acceptable to him beyond every other, the edifying sanctity of your lives. Thus, after having been purified from the leprosy of sin, and restored to a participation of those spiritual blessings of which you had been deprived, you will acquire, at length, that perfect degree of purity which will qualify you for the fruition of the unalterable joys of that blissful region into which nothing defiled can enter.

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SERVING TWO MASTERS.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, vi. v. 24-33. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore, I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you, by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment, why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.

THE portion of Scripture selected by the Church for the Gospel of this Sunday, is extracted from the celebrated discourse delivered by our blessed Saviour to his disciples on the Mount. It begins by asserting the absolute incompatibility of a

divided service, and that for two distinct reasons. For, in the first place, the interests of the masters who are served may be opposed to each other; and, in that case, the service of one is conceived to imply hostility to the other. And, in the second place, although the interests of the two masters should not, in their nature, be repugnant to each other, yet both may, at one and the same time, give orders which it will be impossible for the same servant simultaneously to obey. On that supposition it would be necessary to decide between them. And, as the decision given in favor of one, would certainly argue an inferior degree of respect for the other, it may, without impropriety, be denominated, as it is in the text, a species of contempt. "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will adhere to the one and despise the other." Hence, comes the declaration which immediately follows, that the service of God is incompatible altogether with the service of the world. "You cannot serve God and mammon." Mammon is a word of Syriac derivation, signifying riches. And as wealth is one of the main objects of worldly pursuit, it may be considered as a representative of the whole collection of such things as are pursued by those, who, in their aggregate capacity, constitute what, in the language of Scripture, is denominated the world. But in order to obviate the apprehensions which an unreserved devotion to the service of God, to the exclusion of that of the world, might

possibly occasion in the minds of his disciples, respecting the articles of food and clothing, Jesus reminds them, with his usual sagacity, of the superior blessings which they actually possess in their corporeal frames, and in the life which animates them; and thus tacitly gives them to understand that the munificent donor of those distinguished blessings will not surely withhold from them the means necessary for their protection and support. “Therefore, I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment?” To convince them sensibly of the force of this observation, with respect to the first of these two articles, which is that of food, he directs their attention to the birds of the air, (some were perhaps at that moment flying over the spot) which make no provision for their own subsistence, but depend for the supply of their wants on the Great Ruler of the universe,—and confidently asks them, if, in the estimation of that same Almighty Being, whom he also calls their Heavenly Father, they may not be thought to hold a more distinguished place, than creatures of an order so comparatively inferior. And if it be credible that they will not experience, in at least an equal, if not greater degree, the gracious effects of his parental goodness? “Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.

Are not you of much more value than they?" Then, as an additional motive to lay aside all undue solicitude respecting the means of subsistence, he represents to them the inutility of that solicitude, by observing that it will not add a single instant to the duration of their lives, the term of which is already immoveably fixed in the councils of the Most High.* Having thus shewn them the unreasonableness and inutility of anxiety concerning provision for their animal support, he next proceeds to the consideration of the article of clothing; and to convince them of the folly of allowing their peace of mind to be disturbed on that subject, he refers them to the flowers which at that very time were growing, perhaps, around them in the fields, and which, without any exertion on the part of man, were clothed with a degree of magnificence, by the hand of their Creator, surpassing whatever even Solomon himself could boast, when arrayed in all the splendor of his glory. From that exuberant profusion of beauty lavished on the attire of these transient and perishable productions of the earth, he teaches them to infer, that *they*, flowers of celestial origin, of more vigorous growth, and more permanent duration, destined to be hereafter transplanted to a happier region, there to flourish with unfading

* Such I conceive to be, in the original Greek, the true meaning of the words which are usually thus translated: "and which of you, by anxious thought, can add to his stature one cubit?" *ηλικια* signifies age as well as stature.

bloom throughout a boundless eternity of ages, will assuredly be protected with not less providential care from the chilling blast and scorching heats, to which they may be exposed during the short period of their vegetation on this their earthly soil. "And for raiment, why are you solicitous? consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. And yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. Now if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith!" With reason, therefore, does he exhort them to banish from their minds that inordinate solicitude respecting the necessities of life, which the unenlightened heathen is wont to indulge, but which *their* conviction of the superintending providence of their heavenly Father should not permit them to harbour in their breasts. "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For all these things do the heathens seek after. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." Finally, he concludes, that the establishment of the kingdom of God in their hearts, by making his holy will the ruling principle of their conduct, and the promotion of his justice, by the assiduous cultivation of every virtuous quality, should be the principal objects of their pursuit. And that they may rest assured that such

earthly matters of secondary consideration, as it may be proper for them to possess, will not be withholden from them. "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

That the service of the world is inconsistent with the service of God, and that too, for the very reasons assigned by the Gospel, must be evident to every one who gives to the subject an impartial consideration. The first reason assigned by the Gospel for the incompatibility of the two services with each other, is comprised in the following terms:—"He will hate the one and love the other." The meaning of which I conceive to be, that such is the essential opposition of the interests of the two masters to each other, that attachment to the one must necessarily imply hostility to the other. How, in reality, is it possible to reconcile that exclusive fondness for earthly riches, honors, and pleasures, which the world prescribes to its devoted adherents, with that poverty of spirit, humility, and self-denial, inculcated by the word of God to his faithful servants? How can he, who, in obedience to the dictates of the former of these two masters, is feelingly alive to every imaginary affront, and who is disposed to pursue the reputed offender with implacable resentment, be thought to cherish a becoming regard for the latter, who enjoins patience under the most outrageous insults, and affection and beneficence to the bitterest enemy? "But I say to you, not to resist evil, but

if any man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (MATT. c. v. v. 39, 44.) Or how, in short, can that man, whose affections are constantly engrossed by the perishable objects of this transient scene, be imagined to bestow that due attention on the good things of the Lord in the land of the living, which should occupy principally the thoughts of a servant of the Most High? No, my friends, it cannot be. You cannot serve two masters whose interests are so essentially and diametrically opposed. They are in a state of perpetual warfare with each other, and, therefore, by entering into the service of one, you proclaim hostility to the cause of the other.

The second reason for which the Gospel declares the impracticability of uniting the service of God with that of the world, is expressed in these words: "He will adhere to the one and despise the other." Yes, my friends, the orders issued by the two masters, though they should not, in themselves, be inconsistent with each other, may, nevertheless, be rendered so by the identity of the time prescribed for the accomplishment of them. Is not this the case when the world calls upon you to discharge one office, whilst God commands you to discharge another? when the world summons you to scenes of gaiety, whilst God requires you to be otherwise employed? When the world urges you to devote to amusements or secular pursuits, a great part of

that day, which God, in an especial manner, has sanctified to himself? How is it possible, on these, and other occasions, when the mandates of the two masters so evidently clash with each other, to obey them both? And may not the preference given to one, be justly construed into a sort of contempt of the other? Now to which of these two masters the preference will be given by those who pretend to divide their service between God and the world, it cannot be a task of great difficulty to decide. The corrupt propensities of the human heart, the force of example, the prejudices of false honor, the fallacious suggestions of perverted reason, all will conspire with the not less real, though invisible agency of the powers of darkness, to give to the world a preponderating influence. And they will devote no more of their time to the service of God than what they flatter themselves may be sufficient to secure an interest in the goods of eternity. But is this the kind of service which is due to the great Creator, from the creatures of his hand? Is the world to be our principal, and God only our subordinate master? Is the greatest part of our time to be dedicated to the world,—and the mere refuse of it alone, what that world may think proper to leave when all its demands have been satisfied, to be consecrated to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth? Will he deign to accept this scanty and ignoble tribute as a sufficient testimony of your fidelity to him? Or do you think that, when the period of your service shall be at an end, it will induce him to acknow-

ledge you for good and faithful servants, and, as such, to admit you into his everlasting joys? No, my friends, the God whom you are commanded to serve, is termed, in the sacred Scriptures, a jealous God. He will not therefore be content with a partial service. He exacts from you, with vigor, your entire, unreserved, and unqualified obedience. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou *serve*," were the words used by our blessed Saviour to Satan in the wilderness, when, by the allurements of earthly power and magnificence, the latter endeavoured to seduce him from his allegiance to his Heavenly Father. Such, my friends, should be your answer to the world when, by its captivating charms, it attempts to inveigle you into its service. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou *serve*." Yes, my friends, all of you, whoever you may be, whatever may be your rank or condition in life, you are all of you the servants of one great master, and that master is God. The diversity of situations in which you are engaged, are only so many different departments allotted to you, by your common master, for the transaction of his business. If you have earthly superiors placed over you, who lay claim to your submission and fidelity, remember that it is in the capacity of his vice-gerents, that they exercise over you their delegated authority; and that in serving them, you serve in reality that Great Being from whom they have themselves received their commissions, and to whom they are responsible for the execution of

them. "Knowing," says the Apostle, "that the Lord both of them and you is in Heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him." (1 Cor. *c. vi. v. 9.*)

Far from being permitted to admit the world into a participation of that empire over you, which is the exclusive prerogative of the One Supreme, you are forbidden even to be conformed to it; (Rom. *c. xii. v. 2*) and are assured, moreover, by St. James, "that whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." (JAMES, *c. iv. v. 4.*) Why then, it may be asked, has our great Creator placed us in this world, if we are not suffered to act in conformity with it? Why has he stationed us in an enemy's country, with the inhabitants of which we are destined to be engaged in perpetual warfare? Is not this a strange and incongruous mode of proceeding, on his part, towards those whom we are taught to consider as marked objects of his affection? To vindicate the conduct of the Almighty, in this respect, it is necessary to take a large and comprehensive view of his designs towards mankind. That we are all truly objects of his particular regard, is not to be denied. But that regard must not be thought to resemble the inconsiderate fondness manifested too frequently by earthly parents in their weak compliance with all the whims and fancies of their darling offspring, in the gratification of their appetites, and in the removal of whatever may be disagreeable to them. No. It is the rational affec-

tion of the tenderest indeed, yet most provident of parents, discovering itself in behalf of his beloved children, in a constant and unremitting attention to the improvement of their nature, in correcting their false and erroneous notions,—in checking the ardor of their irregular propensities, and in subjecting them to a wise and salutary discipline, which may qualify them for that great and eternal destination which he has in reserve for them in a future state of existence. Hence the injunctions delivered in the sacred oracles, of not being conformed to the world, and of being engaged with it in a state of perpetual hostility. For the maxims of the world are addressed to the corrupt inclinations of the human heart, and have a tendency to promote the gratification of them. Since “all that is in the world,” as the Apostle St. John remarks, “is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.” (1 JOHN, *c. ii. v. 16.*) The attainment of pre-eminence, the accumulation of wealth, and the enjoyment of pleasures ; such are the main objects to which the world directs the attention of its votaries,—to which it represents every other as secondary and subservient, and with which it will not allow any other to be put in competition. Whatever is opposed to this its unhallowed scheme of sensual indulgence, it despises and rejects as detrimental to the interests, and unworthy the pursuit, of its deluded adherents. Hence, Christian humility, poverty of spirit, and the mor-

tification of the passions which are prescribed in the Gospel, as necessary to fit us for the society of the blessed, are condemned and exploded; and thus is earth preferred to heaven, time to eternity, and the creature to the Creator, "who is blessed for evermore." We cannot then be surprised, that not only are we forbidden to *serve* a master of this description, whose service is so incompatible with that of the living God, but that we are commanded to manifest an opposition to him? Nor should we complain of being placed by our good and bountiful Creator in this hostile land. For you are to remember, my friends, that the hostility which now unhappily disfigures it, is not of God's, but of man's creation. When it came forth originally from the hand of its Divine Author, it was the seat of peace, of harmony, and order. When God made the world, "he saw that it was good," says the book of Genesis. It was man's transgression of the law of his Creator which made it what it now is. It was the sin of man that transformed the peaceful paradise of God into a dismal theatre of discord and contention. It was sin, that, in the expressive language of the Apostle, subjected all creatures to vanity, and caused them, as it were, to groan and to be in labor until now. (Rom. c. viii. v. 20, 22.) It was sin which, by the revolution produced by it in the constitution of human nature, raised up against us, in the breasts of others, as well as in our own, those numerous hosts of foes with whom it becomes us incessantly

to contend. And sin is, in reality, the prolific parent of all the woes which humanity is heir to. Cease then, presumptuous man, to blame thine all-wise and bounteous Creator for the deplorable consequences of thine hereditary guilt. What? Were the decrees of the Almighty to be altered in thy regard, on account of the perversity of thy sinful progenitor? Was the earth to be no longer the scene of thy probationary state, because sin caused it to put forth thorns and briars, and changed it, by its malignity, into a field of battle? Far from authorising thine unjust complaints, the dispensations of the eternal demand the highest tributes of thy gratitude and praise. For it is here, in an especial manner, that he has displayed towards thee the most astonishing proofs of his boundless love. This, my friends, he has done in the stupendous work of the economy of grace, by which, "having so loved the world as to give his only son to redeem it," he has furnished us with every necessary means of vanquishing the enemies combined against us, and of securing to us the possession of our forfeited inheritance. Can we, then, with reason complain of the hardships of our lot, in being involved in a state of continual warfare, when the powerful arm of the Almighty is stretched forth to aid us in the mighty contest, and a prize of transcendant magnitude is destined to be the reward of our successful exertions during the short period of our mortal existence? Surely not.

Recollect, also, my friends, that although the life of man be a warfare upon earth, yet it is not by any means a state of unqualified trouble and wretchedness. Oh ! no. It is provided, on the contrary, with many comforts which we are still permitted to enjoy. Fight, indeed, we must, and that too until death, if we expect to receive hereafter the crown of life. But our efforts in the contest must be directed against our real, and not against imaginary enemies. The real enemies of our souls, which we are called upon to combat in our conflict with the world, are its false maxims, its corrupt practices, its criminal gratifications and excesses, to which are also to be added our own disorderly and vicious inclinations. To these, indeed, we are to give no quarter. Against these determined enemies of our salvation, it behoves us to wage interminable war. These it is incumbent on you to oppose incessantly with undaunted fortitude and persevering energy. But I know not of any precept of the Gospel of Jesus Christ “ which commands us to manifest an enmity of this description against such innocent pleasures, relaxations, and amusements, as are compatible with the discharge of the various duties of our respective departments.

Let the glory, therefore, of your eternal sovereign be the central point of the circle of your actions. Let a pure intention of promoting that grand and paramount object be the ruling principle of your breasts. Let it animate you in all

your undertakings and pursuits. Let it repress within you all undue solicitude concerning earthly contingencies. Let it prompt you to acquiesce in the providential dispensations of your Father who is in heaven. Let it induce you to receive with thankfulness the gifts of his bounty, and to submit with resignation to his paternal chastisements. Whatever, in short, may be the circumstances of your condition here below, prosperous or calamitous, joyful or afflicting, let it urge you to an inviolable and unreserved compliance with his heavenly mandates. Thus, as the Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts, will you “use the world as if you used it not.” Thus it will not be suffered to exercise over you the authority of a master. And thus will your being be exclusively devoted to the sublime service of the living God, who will not fail to reward hereafter your fidelity with an abundant recompense.

SERMON XXXIX.

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON DEATH.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, vii. v. 11-16. At that time, Jesus went into a city called Naim, and there went with him his disciples, and a great multitude. And when he came nigh to the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow, and much people of the city were with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And he said, Young man, I say to thee, arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all; and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people.

THE Gospel of this Sunday exhibits to our view a truly melancholy and affecting spectacle. A disconsolate widow, bathed in tears, accompanied by a numerous train of sympathising attendants, following with her to the grave the corpse of her dear, her only, son, whom death, in an evil hour, had torn from her embraces,—and thus aggravated, by an additional calamity, that already sad and forlorn condition, which, but a short time before, perhaps, her departed husband had left her to bewail. “And when he (Jesus) came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried

out, the only son of his mother ; and she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her." So melting a scene is well calculated to awaken in our breasts all the tender sensibilities of our nature. Nor did it pass unnoticed by the Saviour of mankind. It touched, on the contrary, his heart in the most lively manner, and so excited his compassion, as to prompt him, by the exertion of his supernatural power, to restore to the fond and deeply afflicted parent her beloved offspring. "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And he said, Young man, I say to thee, arise ; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." O death, thou king of terrors, what ravages dost thou make among mankind ! What desolation dost thou spread around thee ! What affliction, what distress, what anguish, does thy merciless fury engender in the bosoms of surviving friends and relatives ! Not content with the heart-rending woes which thou causest them to suffer for the fate of others, thou art for ever affrighting them with apprehensions of their own. The infidel, indeed, deluded wretch, I abandon to thy terrific horrors. Nor do I object to the troubles which thou excitest in the breasts of libertines. To them they may be salutary. Them they may contribute to reclaim from the evil of their ways. But the sincere, the pious, the virtuous, believer,

whose understanding is captivated to the obedience of Christ, whose heart is uncorrupted by earthly vanities, and whose conduct is regulated by the precepts of the Gospel, what hast thou to do with *him*? Why sadden with thy baleful influence every cheerful scene which it may be given to him to enjoy? Why appal *him* with thy funereal terrors? Why disturb the tranquillity of his unruffled mind? Fear not, Christian, the impotent threats of this king of terrors. Jesus, for *thee*, has disarmed him of his sting. Jesus, for *thee*, has annihilated his despotic power, and planted his own victorious standard in the very heart of his dominions, by his resurrection from the tomb. Strange then, that Christians, with these comfortable assurances imparted to them, should live in continual dread of even his most distant approach. Yet so it is. They cannot bear to think of the termination of their mortal existence. The sole mention of it spreads over their minds a melancholy gloom, and sinks them into dejection. It shall be my endeavour, therefore, this day, my friends, with the assistance of God's grace, to fortify the breasts of Christians of this description against all such unreasonable and dispiriting apprehensions, by rendering their mistaken notions on the subject of death more conformable to the principles of Christianity, by representing it to them in colors much less odious than they are generally too apt to consider it, and by counter-acting, as much as possible, that excessive anxiety

and terror which are sometimes productive of the most melancholy consequences.

That to the impious unbeliever, who rejects the existence of a future state, the thoughts of death must be a bitter source of inexpressible disquietude, dejection, and terror, there can be little difficulty in conceiving. Death, to his narrow and self-degrading conceptions, is the termination of all his hopes, the extinction of all his pleasures and enjoyments, and together with that, the annihilation of his being. Nor is that all. For never did there yet exist an infidel, whose mind was so completely satisfied with his miserable theory, as to preclude every degree of anxiety or apprehension concerning its truth. The consideration of the strong and weighty arguments by which it has been controverted, of the many learned and virtuous men, of ancient as well as of modern times, by whom it has been opposed, of its repugnance to the feelings, the opinions, and conviction, of the bulk of mankind in every age and nation, cannot but operate forcibly upon his mind, and excite within him a considerable degree of dread, lest he be found in the end to be the victim of his own fond and criminal delusion. Hence, to his dark and distempered imagination, death must unavoidably stand forth as a hideous and ghastly spectre. Not only must he regard it as the certain period of all his present joys, satisfactions, and delights, but as the possible, and not improbable, commencement of future woe, unutterable and

eternal. The thought of death must undoubtedly therefore be to him humiliating and painful beyond expression. Nor have I either the power or the inclination, unless he abjure his irreligious tenets, to afford him consolation.

There is another description of persons, moreover, whom the consideration of death is calculated to inspire with just and reasonable alarms, and in favor of whom, I am, by no means, disposed to divest it of its terrors. I speak of those who hesitate not to believe the sacred truths contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but who pay not any attention to the precepts which it enjoins. I speak of those who, hurried away by the impetuosity of their passions, thoughtlessly abandon themselves without control to all the excesses of criminal gratification. I speak of the votaries of ambition, who are in constant pursuit of the transitory honors and distinctions of the world, but who lose sight of that eternal crown to which, as Christians, it becomes them to aspire. I speak of the slaves of mammon, who consume anxious days and sleepless nights in the accumulation of the perishable riches of the earth, but who think not at all "of laying up to themselves treasures in heaven, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." I speak of profligate and depraved libertines, in whom habits of sensual indulgence have extinguished all desire of "the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." To such, death must unquestionably appear in a very hor-

rid and terrific shape. And would to God its impressions were such as to produce within them the happy fruits of repentance and conversion.

As to you, my religious friends, whose minds, illumined by the light of faith, are enabled to see things in their true colors, and whose conduct upon the whole is conformable, I trust, to the justness of your views, the thought of death, far from being an occasion of dismay, should be productive, on the contrary, of consolation and delight. For what is there in death to render it to *you* so formidable an object? Of what advantages will it deprive you, or what calamities will it entail upon you, which should make you so much dread its most distant approaches? Death, to your enlarged and exalted conceptions, is not by any means the extinction of your being. Oh! no. The grand and exhilarating doctrines of life and immortality, brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which you so fondly embrace and cherish, have taught you to consider it in a very different point of view, and to entertain ideas concerning it more honorable far to the nature of man, and more conformable to the merciful designs of God. They have taught you to regard it as a desirable emancipation of your ethereal spirits from their corporeal imprisonment,—as a final separation from a world replete with confusion and disorder,—as a happy passage from a transient state of existence, and that too embittered with many sorrows, to an unchangeable state of bliss

and immortality. Surely, my friends, you cannot, consistently with principles of belief like these, suffer yourselves to be disquieted by an event of this description. More reasonable far, and consonant to such principles, would be the liveliest sentiments of joy and exultation. What other sentiments, in reality, can be so well suited to an event believed in its consequences to be so honorable and advantageous? Confined and pent up within the contracted limits of your mortal frames, how are your freeborn souls enslaved and shackled! How cramped are the operations of their intellectual powers! How repressed their activity! How enfeebled their energy! How liable to be affected by every, even the slightest, indisposition to which the animal economy is exposed. "For the corruptible body," says the wise man, "is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." (*WISDOM, c. ix. v. 15.*) From this their humiliating and degrading confinement, death will act the part of a friendly deliverer. He will break asunder the bonds which hold them at present in captivity, and send them forth disembodied, free, and unrestrained, to the full exercise of all their faculties, to the utmost extent of their capacity.

But of all the effects produced on the soul of a sincere and devout Christian, (and let it be kept in remembrance, that it is to such, and to such alone, I am now addressing myself)—of all the effects, I say, produced on the soul of a sincere and devout

Christian, by its connection with the body, there is none more humiliating to him, none at the same time more painful and distressing, than that violent struggle to which it gives rise, between the law of the spirit, and the law of the members ; the one unfolding to his view the bright regions of everlasting bliss, the other opposing to that heavenly prospect the fascinating charms of earthly enjoyments ; the one inflaming his heart with a holy ardor for the invisible goods of eternity, the other attaching it to the visible goods of time ; the one prompting him to seek happiness in doing the holy will of God, the other urging him to pursue the same by yielding without control to the impetuous impulse of his irregular inclinations. Of this interior and distracting combat which raged within them, the most pious and exemplary characters in the Christian Church have at all times complained, in the most affecting language. This has formed the constant subject of their sighs and lamentations. This induced the Apostle of the Gentiles to describe, in terms so pathetically expressive, the pangs which he thence sustained, and stimulated him to vent in so moving a strain, his warmest wishes for his deliverance. " I find then," says this great Apostle, a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members."

Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? And this, my pious friends, is to you, I doubt not, a frequent cause of uneasiness and dejection. But when the bonds, which unite together the material and immaterial part of your being, shall be dissolved, then will all this disquietude be dispelled for ever. Then will that contest between those conflicting powers, which war perpetually within you, be finally terminated. Then, in short, unrestrained by obstacles, unembarrassed in the freedom of its operations, and triumphant over every opposition, the heaven-born spirit will wing its flight to its native region, where it will be permitted to indulge eternally its heavenly propensities in uninterrupted acts of adoration, love, and gratitude, to that greatest and best of beings, from whom it sprang. Such, then, on the one hand, being the afflictions and troubles from which death will infallibly extricate you; and such, on the other hand, the high advantages of which he will put you in possession, by the dissolution of the union which subsists at present between your perishable bodies and your immortal spirits, instead of trembling at the idea of his most distant advances, ought you not rather to hail his arrival, as an event in reality devoutly to be wished for?

Nor should your separation from the world, which death will ultimately effectuate, cause you to be at all disquieted or dejected. For, tell me, my Christian friends, in what light are you accus-

tomed to contemplate the world? Are you not in the habit of considering it as a strange land? as a place of banishment from your true country? yourselves, do you not regard as pilgrims and exiles? Can you then look upon that event which is to remove you from this strange land, which is to terminate your sequestration from your true country, as a calamity to be dreaded? Can you deem it a misfortune to have reached at length your heavenly home, after a long, and perhaps toilsome, journey? Or is there any thing upon earth which has engaged your affection to such a degree, as to cause you to quit it with great regret? Do you discover, amidst its gilded pomps, its perishable riches, or its transient and unsatisfactory pleasures, any object of so captivating a description, as to render your departure from it a subject of deep concern? What very powerful attractions can objects like these present to you, whose nobler and more exalted ambition aspires to honors of a nature so far superior, whose hearts, fixed on the eternal tabernacles, speak evidently their treasures to be there deposited, and whose chastened and refined desires thirst incessantly for far other enjoyments than those of sense, even those pure, sublime, and celestial delights, which constitute the happiness of the blessed in the kingdom of God? For, to speak in the language of St. Paul, "they that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the

things that are of the spirit. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. c. viii. v. 5-9.) In a word, my pious friends, there is only one point of view in which the world can be consistently deemed of great importance to you, and that is when viewed as a place of preparation for another and better state of existence. In this point of view you have ever been accustomed to consider it. To this estimation of it, you have endeavoured, I trust, to render your conduct, in every respect, conformable. Should you not, therefore, cherish the thought of death, which is an entrance into this other and better state of existence, as consoling and animating beyond every other?

Yes, my friends, death, to the good and pious Christian, is no more than an entrance into another and a better state of existence. It is the breaking down of the partition which stands between his soul and the sight of that Being who is always present with him, and is about to manifest himself to him in the fulness of joy. It is a removal from before his eyes of that veil of flesh, which intercepts the effulgence of the divine glory. When this entrance, therefore, shall have been passed, this partition broken down, this veil removed, oh! think but for a moment on the wonders which will then be displayed to his view; on the transports of admiration which will ravish his soul, on the torrents of inexpressible delights with which it will be inundated! Joy without sorrow, plea-

sure without pain, rest without labor, honor without envy, friendship without bounds, love without measure, happiness without end. Such, such, O God of infinite goodness and mercy, are the rewards which thou hast prepared for thy faithful servants. Where then is the good and pious Christian, who, when he reflects on this immense profusion of unutterable and everlasting delights, is not induced, with St. Paul, to consider death as his gain; to desire most earnestly, with the same Apostle, "to be dissolved and to be with Christ," and, with the royal Psalmist, rapturously to exclaim, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

But there is another consideration inseparably connected with the thought of death, which even in pious and virtuous minds is apt to awaken the most distressing disquietudes and alarms. And that is the consideration of that awful trial which will afterwards take place, and upon the issue of which will depend, for all eternity, their unalterable doom. This, my friends, I acknowledge to be, in itself, a consideration of a most terrific description, which, were it not for the consoling assurances communicated to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, might reasonably overwhelm us with the deepest melancholy, and almost sink us into despair. For what more tremendous thought can possibly enter into the mind of an accountable and imperfect being, than that of appearing in the august pre-

sence of the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, to receive from him that definitive sentence which will fix for ever his unchangeable destiny? But “blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David his servant.” Encouraged by so gracious and exhilarating a declaration, even to this last solemn act may you be permitted to look forward with well-grounded but humble confidence. For by it you are given to understand, that the offended justice of that supreme arbiter of life and death, before whose awful tribunal you are to take your trial, has been satisfied by the atonement of an all-powerful Mediator; that that all-powerful Mediator has purchased for you your redemption, at the price of all his blood; and that the infinite merits of his sufferings and death are pleading perpetually your cause at the throne of mercy. This same Mediator, you are also assured, “is not one who is not acquainted with your infirmities,” but one, who, sin alone excepted, knows them all from his own experience. Yes, my friends, he is the compassionate friend of sinners. He invites, urges, importunes them, with the most earnest solicitude, to return from their evil ways, promises them, on their repentance, the pardon of their sins, however great or numerous they may be, and holds out to them the allurements of a blissful immortality, to induce them to accede to his gracious overture.

Such, therefore, and so great, being the extent of the mercy of God, in Christ reconciling the world to himself, in behalf of even the most profligate and abandoned sinners, surely it cannot be thought that he will treat with unrelenting severity the very pardonable foibles of those who serve him in the main with fidelity and exactitude, but who, nevertheless, from the constitutional frailty of their nature, may be surprised occasionally into some little deviations from the strict line of conscientious rectitude. Away then, my pious and worthy friends, with every desponding or dejecting thought. Suffer not the sense of your imperfections and defects to diffuse over your minds a melancholy gloom. Accustom yourselves to reflect with humble confidence on the commiserating tenderness of your merciful Redeemer. If prompted by passion, allured by worldly incentives, or tempted by the common energy of your souls, you should be unwarily seduced from the path of duty, return to it without delay; humble yourselves in the presence of the God of your salvation, sue to him for mercy, through the infinite merits of your all-powerful advocate; renew to him your promises of future allegiance and fidelity, and avail yourselves of the means appointed by Christ for your purification from guilt, and the restoration of your innocence. By acting in this manner you will prepare yourselves more effectually for the trial which awaits you at the period of your dissolution, than by yielding to the disquietudes of a puncti-

lious scrupulosity, which, by harrassing the mind with nugatory and minute subtleties, fatiguing the spirits, and exciting imaginary terrors, has a pernicious tendency to repress within you the sublime emotions of devotional ardor, to involve your souls in darkness, and to deprive you of all those exquisite and ineffable comforts, which, unobstructed in the operations of its own native influence, religion is so admirably calculated to impart. And thus will you be led to consider death as I have endeavoured to represent it to you this day, as an emancipation of your souls from their earthly bondage, as an ultimate conclusion to that intestine war which is destructive of their inward quiet, and as a happy exchange of the land of their exile for their true country, for that blessed realm of incomprehensible and never ending happiness, "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for those who love him."

SERMON XL.

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xiv. v. 1-11. At that time, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the sabbath-day to eat bread, they watched him. And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy; and Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? But they held their peace; but he taking him, healed him, and sent him away; and answering them, he said, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the sabbath-day? And they could not answer him these things; and he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them, When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee; because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

THE Pharisees, who were remarkable for their punctilious compliance with the external practises enjoined by the Mosaic law, were constantly upon the watch to discover, if possible, in the conduct of our blessed Saviour, some ground of accusation in this respect. Of this, a particular instance is

recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday, when Jesus, as is there stated, was a guest at the table of one of their sect. "And it came to pass, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chiefs of the Pharisees on the sabbath-day to eat bread, that they watched him." Jesus was well aware of their attention to him, nor was he ignorant of their censorious disposition, and of their prejudices against him. He suffered not, however, these considerations to prevent him from doing an act of humanity, though he foresaw they would construe it into a proof of his disregard of the law of Moses. For beholding a man before him laboring under a dropsical complaint, he called upon them to say, if, in their estimation, the cure of a sick man on the sabbath-day, would be a profanation of that solemnity; and then, though they marked their disapprobation by their silence, proceeded, without delay, to restore the sufferer to health. "And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy; and Jesus answering, spake to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? But they held their peace; but he taking him, healed him, and sent him away." Although, however, he would not allow their unjust prejudices to operate to the detriment of the interests of charity, yet in tenderness to them, he graciously condescended to give such a vindication of his conduct as was sufficient to satisfy every candid and ingenuous mind. For appealing to their own practice in

matters of less importance, as when there was question, for instance, of extricating from a pit an ox or an ass, which they did not consider to be inconsistent with the Mosaic ordinance respecting the sabbath, he fairly inferred, that the work of much greater consequence which he had just performed, could not in candor be deemed an infraction of the law. “And answering them, he said, Which of you shall have an ox or an ass fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the sabbath-day?” So conclusive an inference did not admit of the possibility of a reply. The sacred text accordingly adds,—“And they could not answer him to these things.” The remainder of the Gospel is a parable exemplifying the injurious effect of pride on the one hand, and the beneficial consequence of humility on the other, to which is subjoined the following declaration:—“Because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.”

The firmness of our blessed Saviour, as exhibited to us in this day’s Gospel, in refusing to allow an undue regard to the false notions of the supercilious Pharisees to deter him from the performance of a work of mercy, and the conciliating disposition which he displayed at the same time, in condescending to enter upon a justification of his conduct, furnish us with examples which it well becomes us to imitate in our intercourse with the world.

A decent attention to the manners, customs, and

tempers, of those with whom we are in the habits of social intercourse, a respect for their opinions, and a disposition to conciliate their good-will and esteem, are objects which, far from being worthy of censure, are deserving, on the contrary, of every commendation. Banish then from among you, my friends, whatever is calculated to produce no other effect than that of alienating from you the minds of your fellow-citizens ; of creating disgust, and of exposing even your religion itself to the aspersions of the ungodly. Singularity in dress, uncouthness of manners, sullenness of aspect, asperity of language, are no where recommended in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By none of these ungainly peculiarities was the life of our blessed Saviour distinguished. And the study of St. Paul, who exhorted the faithful of Corinth “to be imitators of him, as he also was of his divine Master,” was “to be all to all, that he might gain all to Christ.”

But although it be permitted,—although it be even laudable in matters which in themselves are indifferent,—to shew a becoming deference to the opinions of others, to consult their inclinations, to adopt such customs, and to assume such manners, as generally prevail, yet by no means are we to be induced, by any consideration whatsoever, to desert the standard of truth and virtue. That would indeed be to carry our condescension to an unwarrantable length. So criminal a compliance no motives can justify. And yet, my friends, how

very prevalent is this criminal compliance! Many there are, who, dazzled by the splendid talents, or awed by the extensive erudition of those who possess a distinguished rank in the literary world, thoughtlessly embrace their maxims, however opposite to those of the Gospel. The desire of passing for persons of enlarged minds, and of liberal sentiments, and the fear of incurring the imputation of bigotry, persuade numbers, in opposition to all steadiness of principle, to disguise the genuine tenets of their religion, to disregard its precepts, or by forced and indulgent explications, to fritter them away to unmeaning formalities. Some, smarting from the shafts of ridicule, desert the banners of their crucified King; and the cowardly apprehension of appearing singular, deters others from walking in his footsteps. Were the hearts of infidels laid open to our view, often should we discover in the presumptuous self-styled philosopher, no other than vanity's ignominious slave. Did we search the breast of the libertine, we should find him, perhaps, in the midst of his excesses, sacrificing his inclinations, as well as his conscience, to the corrupt opinions of men whom in secret he condemns. One, to be thought a person of spirit and generosity, will consume his substance in the most extravagant prodigality, and bring distress and misery upon himself and family. Another, dreading the appellation of a devotee, will blush to be seen employed in the service of his Maker. A third, that he may not

be esteemed intolerant and austere, will weakly connive at errors and vices, which it should be his endeavour to rectify and correct. Ask that vindictive man who will listen to no terms of reconciliation, whose anger no submission can appease, why he harbors in his breast such implacable resentment, he will tell you, perhaps, that he wishes not to degrade himself in the eyes of the world. Inquire whence comes that creeping servility, that despicable adulation, that unmanly, that unchristian, prostitution of principle and virtue, and every other vile and detestable art practised by designing parasites in their intercourse with the rich and powerful; and you will find it to proceed from an interested motive of acquiring their favor by flattering their passions.

If we reflect on the consequences of this indiscriminate conformity to the opinions of men, we shall thence be furnished with weighty reasons for lamenting its pernicious sway. Consult experience. To what are we to attribute the sanguinary exploits of those unprincipled conquerors of nations,—those scourges of the human race, whose very names present to our imaginations a frightful picture of whatever is most shocking and barbarous, and who have spread everywhere around them desolation and ruin,—but to an insatiable avidity of acquiring the reputation of heroes in the erroneous minds of men? What but a weak and impious regard for the opinions of the world, prompts the unrelenting avenger of imaginary

wrongs, regardless of the danger to which he is himself exposed in the uncertain contest, in opposition to every sentiment of humanity, and in contempt of the united reclamations of reason and religion, to discharge his instrument of death at the heart of the reputed offender? How often, from the same cause, is guilt permitted to triumph unresisted, whilst prostrate innocence implores in vain an intrepid champion to assert her cause, and to vindicate her injured name from censure and disgrace! Many who to that great and invaluable blessing of early impressions of piety and virtue, have added the advantage of confirmed habits, and who amidst temptations of various descriptions have ever remained unshaken and steady, have fallen at length the victims of this popular idol; and thousands are still the slaves of error and of vice, agitated by remorse, groaning beneath the load of crimes which weighs them down to the earth, and sighing for their emancipation from the cruel bondage in which they are detained, only because they are destitute of sufficient courage to encounter the animadversions of the companions or witnesses of their former excesses.

Such, my friends, and many more than it is possible for me at present to enumerate, are the dreadful effects produced by this yielding conformity to the false opinions and maxims of the world; a conformity which, at the same time that it is so baneful in its influence, is as disgraceful also in itself as it is replete with folly. What in

reality can be more disgraceful than to suffer your immortal souls, your souls formed to the image of the Eternal God, to forfeit their true and intrinsic excellence for the false lustre of undeserved applause? Of applause purchased by self-degradation,—by a base desertion of whatever is truly respectable in itself and honorable to your nature! Better be despised with real worth, than applauded without it. Is not the very consciousness of being applauded for what renders you in reality contemptible, and must make you so in your own estimation, sufficient to overwhelm you with confusion, and to call up into your countenances an involuntary blush? Would you be esteemed by others for actions which you condemn yourselves?

And after all, my friends, how capricious, how changeable, how transient, is this airy phantom of human applause for which men pant so eagerly, which they pursue with so much ardor! Is it not subject to all the versatility of whim, interest, fashion? Are not its votaries the frequent victims of their deluded zeal? And can you, my friends, besides being so lost to all sense of genuine honor as to prostitute your virtue, be so destitute also of attention to your true interest as to sacrifice your happiness, both here and hereafter, to so precarious a contingency? This, however, you do, when, from a servile regard to the opinions of men, you are led to relinquish the path of duty. For there is no enjoyment of present happiness without tranquillity of mind. Nor is any hope to

be entertained of possessing it in future, unless by your conduct in this your state of trial you secure to yourselves the approbation of him "who will render to every one according to his works." But what tranquillity of mind can that man enjoy, who is constantly stunned by the importuning clamors of a guilty conscience perpetually upbraiding him with the base desertion of his principles? Or how can he expect to experience the approbation of the impartial Dispenser of rewards, who is incessantly provoking him by the violation of his laws?

If still, however, my friends, you obstinately persist in setting so high a value on the sanction of human opinion, why not study to acquire at least that of the more virtuous part of your species? Or rather, I should say, why not from purer and more exalted motives pursue a line of conduct, which will infallibly secure to you their approbation and esteem? Is there not much more satisfaction in being praised and caressed for good and worthy actions, by men whom you respect and venerate on account of their incorruptible rectitude and impartial discernment, than extolled for actions you are ashamed to have performed, by a set of worthless and unprincipled beings, whose praise is censure, and whose honor is disgrace?

If we proceed still farther, and consider the nature of this ignoble conformity to the opinions, customs, and manners, of the world, as it stands opposed to the fundamental principles of the

Christian religion, we shall thence be enabled to form a more adequate conception of its intrinsic sinfulness. Divine charity, or the love of God above all things, is enjoined by Jesus Christ as the most important precept of his holy law. "Thou," says he, "shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This," he adds, "is the greatest, and the first, commandment." Weigh attentively, my friends, the import and extent of this heavenly ordinance. It is not limited to a temporary effusion of devotional sentiments which may be poured forth occasionally in exercises of piety. No. It is a strong, uninterrupted, and universal, attachment, an ardor which knows no bounds, an affection which fills the capacity of the soul. What can be more opposite to this divine injunction, than that pusillanimous dereliction of truth and virtue, occasioned by a mean and servile respect for the opinions of the world? Can he be said to comply with this paramount obligation of the religion of Jesus Christ, who prefers the false maxims of worldlings to the adorable precepts of the evangelical code? Can the flame of divine love be thought to glow in the unhallowed breasts of those idolatrous worshippers of earthly fame, who are more apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of frail and degenerate mortals, than of heaven's Eternal King? Who fear less the just reproaches of their great Creator, than the scoffs and insults of infidels and libertines; who are more

concerned for their own glory, than for the glory of him to whom alone it is due? who “love the praise of men more than the praise of God?” And are not such the distinguishing features in the characters of those whose conduct is regulated by the opinions of the world? Do they not, therefore, evidently infringe the most essential article in the Christian law?

Besides, my friends, gratitude alone, one would think, should be a principle sufficiently powerful in the breasts of all who are not destitute of the common feelings of nature, to attach them to the service of their best benefactor. Do you not contemplate with horror the base ingratitude of a man who deserts his warmest friend at a time when it becomes him to stand forward in his defence? Such, however, my friends, is the imputation which you incur in neglecting to defend the cause of God in opposition to the false maxims and corruptions of the world. For where is the friend who has given you so many, and such unparalleled tokens of affection, as he “whose charity surpasseth all understanding?” Where the benefactor whose liberality is comparable to that of the author of all good gifts? Are not all the advantages which distinguish and adorn your nature the effects of his ineffable bounty? Has he not imparted to you a variety of comforts to mitigate the troubles of your probationary state? Has he not other blessings for you in reserve, infinitely superior to those of earth? Does he not even

supply you with every means requisite to secure to you hereafter the possession of them? What stronger proofs of his affection and beneficence can you possibly require? And is not this the friend, is not this the benefactor, whom basely you betray, when from a desire of obtaining the applause of men, or from a dastardly apprehension of giving them offence, you act in opposition to his holy will? and who are those men whose smiles and frowns you suffer to exercise over you so powerful an influence? Who are they? Why they are for the most part an assemblage of such as, from their corrupt maxims, and disorderly manners, come under that general description of persons, who are characterized in the Gospel by the appellation of the world. That is to say, they are the avowed enemies of him, who, besides being your supreme benefactor, is also your eternal sovereign,—your sovereign to whom you have vowed inviolable allegiance. They are enemies against whom you have sworn to wage interminable war. They are the enemies of your own souls, who would hurry you on to your own perdition. And at what time are you thus allured or intimidated into so treacherous a violation of the most sacred ties of gratitude and fidelity to your gracious ruler? At a time when the interests of his sacred cause should call forth your most vigorous exertions in its defence. At a time, perhaps, when his injured name, his opposed doctrines, or his violated laws, should rouse in our breasts a gene-

rous indignation, and stimulate you to deeds of heroic fortitude ; when, with all the intrepidity of undaunted champions of the cross, it behoves you to combat the united efforts of its determined foes, infidel arrogance, and corrupt licentiousness. Are you not seized with horror in contemplating a representation of such complicated guilt ? How striking the contrast exhibited to us by our heavenly model ! To what a wretched condition should we have been reduced, had he allowed himself to be influenced in this manner by the opinions of men ! Would he ever have proclaimed to the world that sublime doctrine of mysterious wisdom, that inexhaustible source of present comfort, and the foundation of every future hope, in contradiction to the prevailing notions and inveterate prejudices of priests, magistrates, and people ? Would he have opposed to the fury of tumultuous passions the salutary restraint of his moral precepts ? Would not the scoffs, reproaches, and insults, which he experienced from human malice, have deterred him from the execution of his grand design of mercy in our regard ? Would he ever have consented to die as a malefactor, loaded with the outrages, the curses, and execrations of a whole nation ? Thus abandoned to our own incompetency to satisfy the claims of divine justice, misery eternal must have been unavoidably our doom. But because in discharging the august functions of his divine mission he disregarded the erroneous notions of the world ; because in doing the work

of his heavenly Father he rose superior to every earthly consideration, and “was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” therefore hath he recovered for us the lost titles of our forfeited inheritance, and hence “hath God exalted him, and given him a name which is above all other names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” If, therefore, out of pure, disinterested mercy, if, in order to rescue you from the bondage of Satan, and to restore you to the liberty of children of God, your divine Saviour has triumphed so gloriously over the false maxims and opinions of the world, can you be so ungrateful as to favor their pretensions when aimed at the subversion of his religion and laws? Shall not the intrepidity of the immortal conqueror who has subdued the world, inspire you with fortitude to withstand its assaults? Does not the exaltation of your victorious chief, and the desire of participating in the fruits of his conquest, excite within you a generous ardor to adhere firmly to his victorious standard?

Moreover, my friends, “the disciple is not above his master, and the servant above his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?” Therefore, fear them not. Their insults and outrages will only contribute to make you more conformable to your divine master, and to enhance your glory in the eyes of the whole world. “For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hidden that shall

not be known." But the day will at length arrive when the justice of your cause, the integrity of your principles, the sanctity of your maxims, the truth of your doctrines, will be fully displayed in their genuine colors. Then will you be crowned with immortal honors, amidst the acclamations and applauses of heaven and earth ; whilst your enemies, overwhelmed with confusion and dismay, will close, by an eternity of unutterable disgrace, the momentary triumphs of their errors and their crimes.

Suffer not, therefore, the impious attempts of the ungodly to shake you in your attachment to truth and virtue. Shun, as you would a contagious distemper, the spreading influence of their baneful example. Brave their threats,—despise their allurements,—combat with the weapons of a true soldier of Christ, the bold effrontery of presumptuous infidelity. Shame libertinism from the face of day, and vindicate the cause of your holy religion from the aspersions of its enemies of every description. "Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Remember that you act under the eye of your Sovereign. Remember that the Lord, whilst you are fighting his battles, is himself your witness, from his throne of glory ; that he will crown your perseverance with indubitable success, and reward you with the enjoyment of a blissful immortality. Consider, on the one hand, the consoling promise

of your divine Saviour, to all who profess openly their attachment to him. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, I will confess him before my Father who is in Heaven." And tremble, on the other hand, at the dreadful declaration pronounced by him against those, who, influenced either by fear or shame, or any other motive whatsoever, shall suffer themselves to be deterred from their adherence to him. "But whoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in Heaven." Be it therefore our firm and unalterable resolve to maintain, at all events, and whatever may be the consequence, "through honor and dishonor, through good report and bad report," an inviolable fidelity to our God and Saviour. Conscious, at the same time, of our natural infirmity, and knowing also that our best resolutions are exposed to danger from the corrupt principle inherent in us, let us not be too confident in our own efforts; but exerting our most strenuous and unremitting endeavours, let us rely for success on the assistance of the Most High. Nor will he refuse it to our earnest entreaties. But graciously lending a propitious ear to our humble petitions, he will enable us, in opposition to every difficulty we may have to encounter, to preserve a steady and unshaken constancy; and will impart to us hereafter that eternal recompense which he has promised to all who shall persevere to the end.

SERMON XLI.

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxii. v. 35-46. At that time, the Pharisees came to Jesus, and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him, tempting him, Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them saying, What think you of Christ? whose son is he? They say to him, David's. He saith to them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, sit on my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

THE Pharisees having heard of the unsuccessful attempt which the rival sect of the Sadducees had made to perplex Jesus by a captious case, concerning a future resurrection, met together, as the Gospel informs us, and having planned, it may be presumed, a new mode of attack, commissioned one amongst them, a doctor of the law, to propose to him the following question:—"Which is the

great commandment of the law ?” In order that you may be able to comprehend the design of this insidious interrogation, it may be proper to remark, that it originated in a maxim, which, at that time, appears to have prevailed among the Jews,—that, as the multiplicity of precepts contained in the law of Moses, was, in their opinion, too great to be wholly complied with, it was sufficient to observe a few of the most important, and that the observance of these would compensate for the violation of the remainder. Now, as there existed among them a diversity of sentiments respecting the particular ordinances to which the preference was to be given, Jesus was called upon to deliver his decision on this momentous subject. But mark, my friends, the sagacity displayed in his reply. He did not tell them at once that their contracted system of a partial compliance was unfounded and erroneous, for that, he knew, would only excite the prejudices of the people against him, the very object which his enemies had in view, and cause them to shut their ears to his instructions and admonitions. But he selected two precepts, of so comprehensive a nature, as to inculcate implicitly the entire code. These two precepts were, the law of God, and the love of man. “Jesus said to him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thymself." He added, moreover, that these two leading and predominant principles of conduct, instead of superseding the practice of inferior and subordinate regulations, prescribed by the Mosaic institute, involved them, in reality, in their comprehensive nature. "On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets depend." Our blessed Saviour having thus extricated himself, by his consummate wisdom, from the snare in which his adversaries had sought to entangle him, proposed to them, in return, three questions of the highest moment, the object of which I conceive to have been the clear exposure of those false notions respecting the Messiah, which they had been led to entertain, and which prevented them from recognizing in *him* the true character of that august personage. The first two questions were: "What think you of Christ? whose son is he?" To which they having replied that he was the son of David, "they say to him, David's,"—Jesus, in the third place, desired them to account for that lofty title of Lord, conferred by David upon one, whom they themselves acknowledged to be his son; for, in the 109th Psalm, which was universally applied to the Messiah, David denominates him his Lord? "How then, said he to them, doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool! If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" The proper answer to have been given to these questions was undoubtedly this;

that the title of Lord was not applied by David to the Messiah, in the same sense in which it is attributed to earthly potentates, who exercise worldly dominion over their subjects, and who are usually surrounded with the pomp and pageantry of courtly magnificence, but that it was ascribed to him in consequence of the transcendent superiority of his nature, which, though unaccompanied with any external marks of preeminent dignity, was nevertheless inherent in him, and was the true cause of that profound respect with which he was mentioned by David. Such, I say, was the reply which it became the Pharisees to return to the questions put to them by our blessed Saviour, on the present occasion. But this reply they could not make consistently with their erroneous prepossessions, and without acknowledging Jesus himself to be the promised Messiah. For who could be thought to have so just a title to that transcendent superiority of nature, as he, who by such a multiplicity of stupendous miracles, justified so clearly his pretensions to it? They were, therefore, reduced to silence. Nor were they afterwards disposed to have recourse to interrogatories, the result of which, in the present instance, had proved at once so disgraceful to themselves, and so creditable to Jesus. "And no man," says the sacred text, "was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more questions."

In order that you may form a just conception

of the comprehensive nature, and extensive influence of those two great commandments of the law, which our blessed Saviour preferred so decidedly to every other, and on which he declared the whole law and prophets to depend, I will begin by expounding to you the full meaning of the first of these two most important injunctions; and having exhibited to you, in its effects, some specimens of the extent of its operation, I will then proceed to the consideration of the second, in the discussion of which I will also pursue a similar method. The former of these momentous precepts, and which our blessed Saviour emphatically termed “the greatest and the first commandment,” is expressed by him in the following terms:—

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.” The love of God, therefore, which is prescribed by our blessed Saviour, in the text, as a duty which should hold the highest rank in our estimation, is that supreme attachment to the adorable author of our being, which is the combined result of a *mind* deeply impressed with admiration and esteem of his transcendent excellencies, of a *heart* captivated by their alluring charms, and of a *soul* directing the whole of its energies to the accomplishment of his holy will. Now it is in the very nature of an attachment of this description to extend its influence to the whole of our religious and moral conduct. For, as it regards the *mind*, it is the prolific parent of

faith in the mysterious revelations of God, how incomprehensible soever they may be to human reason,—of confidence in his promises, of patience under his paternal chastisements, and of perfect submission to his divine will, under all the dispensations of his providence. As it relates to the *heart*, it produces that devout and heavenly frame of mind which causes us to meditate with delight on the perfections of his nature, to speak of him with satisfaction, and to pour forth to him our hearts in prayer, in sentiments of adoration, praise, and gratitude. And, finally, with respect to the *soul*, it stimulates to that steady and undeviating pursuit of virtue in all its various forms and ramifications, so necessary to render our conduct acceptable to him. How, in fact, in the first place, is it possible for a man, who, loving God with his whole *mind*, is deeply penetrated with the utmost admiration and esteem of the attributes of his nature, to refuse his assent to the truth of mysteries, which has the attribute of his unerring veracity for its basis? How can he doubt of the fulfilment of promises, for which God has pledged his inviolable fidelity? How can he repine at the afflictions which may befall him, when he is assured by the Apostle that they are the salutary effects of God's paternal regard for his beloved children, whom he chastiseth for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness?" (HEB. c. xii. v. 10.) Or how can he be dissatisfied with God's providential dispensations, when he beholds in them

parts of that vast system of infinite wisdom, directed to the purposes of infinite goodness? How, in the second place, is it possible for any human being, who, loving God with his whole *heart*, feels within him that ardent glow of affection which this sentiment implies, to prevent his thoughts from turning frequently towards him, from dwelling upon him with inexpressible delight, from contemplating with rapture those great, admirable, and endearing qualities, which preeminently distinguish him? If, “from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” may not that heart, whose capacity is filled, according to the prescription of the sacred text, with the love of God, may not that heart, I say, be well thought to prompt the tongue to give frequent utterance to its feelings, on so interesting a subject? And must it not be supposed to avail itself with alacrity of every opportunity which may present itself, to offer to the supreme object of its affections its warmest tributes of religious homage? And, finally, how is it possible for an individual, who, loving God with his whole *soul*, bends the whole united force of all its powers to the accomplishment of his holy will, to avoid practising those virtues which are held forth in the sacred oracles as the peculiar objects of his approbation and delight? With reason, then, my friends, did our blessed Saviour pronounce the love of God to be “the greatest and the first commandment,” since it is not only to be so considered, because it has the greatest and the first

of beings for its immediate object, but because it is also the great original source of every religious and moral obligation, and branches out into all that variety of duties which the law inculcates.

Nor let it be imagined that the observations which I have been making to you on the extensive influence of the love of God on those by whom it is duly cultivated, are the exaggerated representations of a heated imagination. No, my friends, they are not. They are strictly true. And for the truth of them, I appeal with entire confidence to the honest feelings of every ingenuous heart. For, tell me, my friends, when you behold a man conspicuously distinguished by an assemblage of great and excellent qualities; when you see him pursuing a course of life, marked invariably throughout by piety towards God, benevolence to his fellow-creatures, and the most perfect command over his own appetites and temper, and when you yourselves have moreover the advantage of experiencing personally the effects of that benevolence which an individual so good in every other respect, labors incessantly to extend to all who are within his reach, tell me, I ask, if you be not irresistibly impelled to cherish, in his regard, the liveliest sentiments of admiration and esteem? If you do not unavoidably feel an affection for him? If it would not be painful to you in the extreme, to do any thing to wound the good man's feelings? And if you would not deem yourselves happy to be in any way instrumental in the promotion of his

comfort, and the accomplishment of his wishes? Would not your sentiments, your inclinations, your affections, and hatreds, and hopes, and fears, be identified in a manner with his? Would it not be your delight to think of him, to speak of him, to converse with him? Would you ever pronounce his name without evident marks of regard and veneration? Would you hear his character traduced and vilified, with indifference and unconcern? Would you not, on the contrary, step forward in its defence, and strenuously vindicate it from the unjust aspersions, which might, at any time, be cast upon it? Would you not, in short, be anxious to express, by every practicable means, your inviolable fidelity, respect, attachment, and gratitude, to a person of such extraordinary worth,—and him too, your friend and benefactor? Unquestionably you would. Well then, my friends, and is not God, of all beings, beyond comparison the greatest and the best? Does not all the splendour of the most illustrious worthies, who have been the brightest ornaments of their nature, and the choicest blessings of their race, disappear like stars before the orb of day, when the eternal sun of righteousness rises upon your minds, arrayed in the matchless effulgence of his glory, and scattering abroad the blessings of his beneficence? Is not he the great and inexhaustible source of all the most admired virtues which have ever embellished the human character? Or do not the magnitude and extent of the unparalleled benefits which he

ceases not to lavish on the creatures of his hand, cast, as it were, into the shade, all the beneficial effects of the wisest plans which the most enlightened minds and benevolent hearts have ever conceived and executed for the amelioration of the condition of the children of men? Think but for a moment on the various instances of the stupendous bounty which he has manifested in your regard, your creation, preservation, redemption, sanctification, with every suitable provision for your future exaltation, and say, if among all, all the children of men, there be one to whom the warmest tribute of your affection is so justly due, as to this your best and supreme benefactor?

Having thus expounded to you, as far as time will allow, the extensive operation of the love of God, termed by our blessed Saviour "the greatest and the first commandment," I will now proceed to the consideration of the love of our neighbour, which he has denominated the second, and which he has explicitly declared to be similar to the first. "And the second," says Christ, "is like to it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This commandment is, in reality, to be considered as included in the first. For as the love of God essentially implies the observance of all his Divine ordinances, according to the express declaration of Christ, "he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;" and as the love of our neighbour is pronounced, in this day's Gospel, to be one of those ordinances, it

necessarily follows, that, properly and strictly speaking, we cannot be said to love God, unless we also love our neighbour. But as from the largest rivers, streams are sometimes seen to flow, which branch out into a variety of subordinate rivulets, so the love of our neighbour, though it emanate itself from the love of God, may be conceived to diffuse itself over the soul through a diversity of channels, manifesting its benign influence in prompting to the discharge of all the numerous duties which are connected with it. Before, however, I enter upon the consideration of those duties, it is right that you should have just and accurate ideas of the import of the commandment from which they are derived. What, then, is to be understood by the term neighbour? And what is meant by loving him as ourselves? The neighbour, my friends, whom Christ commands you to love, is every human being. It is not the object of your particular regard, the individual of a particular family, the member of a particular society, the inhabitant of a particular country, or the votary of a particular religious denomination. No. It is man—it is man in all the various circumstances, situations, and conditions in which he may possibly be placed, be he countryman or alien, Christian or infidel, friend or foe. Such, my friends, is the enlarged and comprehensive signification which is assigned to the term neighbour in the glossary of the Gospel. Such is the neighbour you are commanded to

love, even as you love yourselves. But is this possible? Is it possible to cherish for an individual, who is connected with us by no other ties than those of common humanity, or who is alienated even perhaps from us by his hostile disposition, an affection equal to that which we feel for ourselves, or to pursue his interests with the same ardor with which we pursue our own? Is not this unnatural? Is it not opposed to the strongest propensities of the human heart, which, for the wisest purposes, the great Author of our being has implanted in it? Is it not in direct contradiction to the practice, as well as to the feelings, of the most exemplary adherents of the Christian profession? Is the law of God, which is written in the sacred volume, repugnant to that which the same Omnipotent Legislator has impressed in indelible characters on the tablets of our hearts? Or are they, whom we are accustomed to look up to with reverence, as its strictest observers, to be regarded as perpetual violators of it? Questions like these, my friends, have all of them their rise in a misconception of the law. They suppose it to enjoin an affection for our neighbours equal to that which we entertain for ourselves. But this is an erroneous supposition. For the law does not say, thou shalt love thy neighbour *as much as* thyself, but thou shalt love thy neighbour *as* thyself. The love which it prescribes is the same in kind, but not in degree. Such, my friends, is the real meaning of the Christian precept of loving our neighbour as our-

selves. Nor can there be a more satisfactory exposition of its general import, than that which is contained in the golden rule delivered by our blessed Saviour to his disciples, on the Mount :—

“ All things, therefore, whatsoever you wish that men should do to you, do you also to them, for this is the law and the prophets.” (MATT. *c.* vii. *v.* 12.) The Christian precept of the love of our neighbour, thus divested of its false interpretation, and exposed in its true light, is the fruitful germ of every social duty. And in this sense is St. Paul to be understood, when he says, “ He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For,” continues the Apostle, “ thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is comprehended in this word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love, therefore, is the fulness of the law.” (ROM. *c.* xiii. *v.* 8, 9, 10.) Whatever, therefore, may be injurious to your neighbour, either in his person, his property, or his character, is to be avoided as a flagrant violation of this Divine rule. For, as your attachment to your own interests would cause you to use your utmost endeavours to protect yourselves from injuries of this description, so a similar regard for the interests of your neighbours should prevent you from giving them occasion to complain of your conduct in their regard, in any of these respects. Hence violence, depredations, insults, detraction, will never dis-

grace the conduct of those whom the benevolent principle of Christian charity, as exhibited in this day's Gospel, animates and governs. Nor is it only in counteracting the disorders of selfish and malignant passions that it exercises its benign influence. No. It prompts, also, to the discharge of every kind and humane office. It instigates those who are actuated by it to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice—to administer comfort to those who are in affliction—to relieve the wants of the indigent, and to contribute as much as possible, within their sphere of action, to the diffusion of happiness around them. Nor is that all. For it manifests, also, its influence on the temper. It induces those whose bosoms it warms, to exercise a due control over their own feelings, and to show a becoming deference to the feelings of others. It renders them, to all with whom they are in habits of social intercourse, mild, affable, accommodating, and friendly. It diffuses an air of benignity over the countenance, and gives even to the accents of the voice a tone of kindness, which is inexpressibly engaging, and which is sure of finding its way to the heart. Such, and many more than time will permit me at present to enumerate, are the happy consequences of that brotherly affection, so forcibly inculcated in the Gospel of this Sunday.

I shall now bring this instruction to a close, by addressing you in the terms employed by our blessed Saviour to the Jews, when he had replied so sagaciously to their insidious question:—"What

think you of Christ? whose son is he?" Is he not the only-begotten Son of that same Eternal Father, whom you are commanded to love with all your heart, and mind, and soul? Does he not possess, in conjunction with him, the entire plenitude of the Divine perfections? Is he not then equally entitled to your most devoted attachment? Again, my friends, "What think you of Christ?" Is he not also your most gracious Redeemer. And should not the transcendent and ineffable love which he has evinced towards you, in a character, beyond every other, the most interesting to you, prompt you to love your fellow-creatures for his sake? Once more, my friends, "What think you of Christ?" Is he not appointed to be hereafter your Sovereign Judge? And what can be more effectually calculated to secure to you a favorable sentence at his awful tribunal than a faithful compliance with the two great precepts of the law which he has himself declared to be an epitome of the whole? "On these two commandments the whole law and prophets depend."

Cultivate, then, my friends, as your Divine Saviour has expressly commanded you, cultivate assiduously these two great and exalted virtues, the love of God, and the love of man. Let God be the paramount object of your affection; and let man be loved in subordination to him. Thus will you qualify yourselves for the blessed society of that blissful region, where the love of God, and the love of man, glow, without interruption, in every heart.

SERMON XLII.

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

 ON THE SIGNS OF A TRUE REPENTANCE.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, ix. v. 1-8. At that time, Jesus entering into a ship, passed over the water and came into his own city; and behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves, He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house. And the multitudes seeing it, feared and glorified God who had given such power to men.

THE Gospel of this Sunday begins by stating a remarkable occurrence which took place in the city of Capharnaum, which Jesus had entered, after having passed the lake of Genesareth, from the country of the Geraseens. The occurrence to which I allude, was that of a paralytic lying on a bed, presented to him by certain individuals, as a fit subject whereon to exercise that supernatural power with which, by this very act, they acknowledged him to be invested. “ And entering

into a ship, he passed over the water, and came into his own city. And behold they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying upon a bed." Their faith, which this conduct so evidently evinced, the blessed Jesus determined to reward, by accomplishing the object of their wishes. But as he knew the infirmity, under which the poor man labored, to have been inflicted upon him in punishment of his sins, he thought it right to announce to him, in the first place, the removal of the cause from which it had proceeded. This he did in that soothing address recorded in the Gospel, with which he comforted the heart of the repentant sinner. "And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." So bold an assumption of Divine authority, which the pardon of sin incontestibly implied, excited the indignation of some of the scribes, who, therefore, pronounced him, in their minds, to be an impious blasphemer. "And behold, some of the scribes said within themselves, he blasphemeth." But Jesus, whose all-pervading eye penetrated into the most secret recesses of their souls, upbraided them with the malevolence of their dispositions in his regard. "And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said, why do you think evil in your hearts?" And having appealed to them to say if his pretension to remove, by his word, the disorder of the paralytic would not be as much an assumption of divine authority as a pretension to forgive sins,

he proceeded, by the actual accomplishment of the former, to shew that he also possessed the power of accomplishing the latter. "Whether is it easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, arise and walk? But that you may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then saith he to the man sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." The command of Jesus was instantly obeyed. "And he arose," continues the sacred text, "and went into his house." Thus did our blessed Saviour clearly demonstrate to the eyes of every beholder, the validity of his pretension to the power of forgiving sins, and the astonished multitude, stricken with awe, gave praise to God for so signal a manifestation of Divine power, which they were compelled to recognize in one clothed with humanity like themselves. "And the multitude seeing it, glorified God, who had given such power to men."

As the Redeemer of mankind announced to the paralytic the forgiveness of his sins, so, in his name, and by his authority, do the Ministers of his Church absolve from guilt the repentant sinner, who sues for pardon at the tribunal of penance; and as the former was accused of blasphemy, by the Jewish scribes, for arrogating to himself a power which was the exclusive prerogative of the Divinity, so the latter are sometimes charged with the same crime by the enemies of their religion, for presuming to exercise a

similar jurisdiction. But although they may not be able, like their Divine Master, to substantiate, by miracles, the validity of their pretensions, yet they may appeal, with reason, in vindication of their authority, to that identical exertion of supernatural power, by which Jesus made good his claim to the authority which he assumed, in the case of the paralytic. For he who declared to the paralytic that his sins were forgiven, has also said to the Ministers of his Church, “Whose sins *you* shall forgive, they are forgiven;” and therefore, the miracle which attested the truth of his declaration in the first instance, should be deemed to be equally applicable to it in the second.

But there are other persons of a very different character from that of the enemies of Catholicity, who, without denying, in the ministers of reconciliation, the reality of the power of absolving sinners from the guilt of their transgressions, are apt, sometimes, to call in question the efficacy of his sentence, when pronounced upon themselves. Anxious to experience the benefit of his ministry, they present themselves before him in attitudes of humility—disclose to him the state of their consciences—confess, with sincerity, the disorders of their past lives—listen with attention to his salutary admonitions,—and having received from him the sentence of absolution, they retire in peace, under the soothing persuasion that their offences are cancelled, and that they are restored once more to the favor of Heaven. Apprehen-

sions, however, afterwards arise in their minds, lest that soothing persuasion, which they so fondly cherished, may have been a deplorable delusion. They fear that the sincere confession of their sins may not have been accompanied with suitable dispositions, and tremble lest the want of that indispensable condition may have prevented the sentence pronounced on earth from being ratified in Heaven.

That your minds, therefore, my friends, may not be disturbed by these distressing apprehensions, and that you may have the most solid and substantial reasons to hope that your sins have been actually remitted, you must endeavour to be furnished with evidence similar to that by which the pardon of the paralytic was ascertained. That evidence, as we learn from the Gospel, was the cure of the disorder under which he labored. For to that did Jesus appeal, when he said to him, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." It is by manifesting yourselves, in like manner, to be happily released from that spiritual palsy which is the effect of sin, and by walking stedfastly in the commandments of the Lord, that you are to be satisfied of the efficacy of the judgment pronounced in your behalf by the Minister of reconciliation; that you are to rest assured that no deficiency of dispositions on your part has defeated the effect of its operation, and that by the application of the merits of your Redeemer to your souls, your guilt has been effaced. Yes, my

friends, if you wish to remove every species of doubt respecting the sentence of the Minister of Christ, declaring to you, in virtue of the authority which has been delegated him, the pardon of your iniquities, you must shake off that spiritual indolence which sin is wont to diffuse over the soul, and labor earnestly, assiduously, and vigorously, in the important work of your salvation. You must exert yourselves to conquer that torpid insensibility to heavenly things with which an inordinate attachment to earthly vanities too frequently benumbs the faculties of the soul. You must, by meditating with attention on the intrinsic excellencies of the adorable Author of your existence, and on the signal instances of incomprehensible goodness and mercy which he has manifested particularly in your regard, endeavour to excite in your breasts a reciprocal affection towards him. You must, as the Apostle exhorts, “press forward (with earnestness) towards the mark, to the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus.” (PHILIP. c. iii. v. 14.) You must guard against relapsing into your former transgressions. You must sue with fervor for assistance from above, to enable you to triumph over your spiritual enemies,—the devil, the world, and the corrupt inclinations of your own hearts. You must, by the most strenuous exertions, correspond with the aid which may be imparted to you, and study to render the whole of your conduct conformable to the maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such, my friends, are the unequivocal marks from which you may be permitted to indulge a well-grounded conviction that the sentence of absolution pronounced upon you by the minister of reconciliation, has not been frustrated by a want of proper dispositions on your part, and that you have actually experienced the benefit of it in the remission of your sins. But are these marks discernible in your conduct? Do your diligence and activity in prosecuting the business of your eternal salvation, indicate an exemption from every paralytic affection in your souls? Does no culpable neglect of the duties of public or private worship, no repugnance to exercises of piety, no inattention, no irksomeness, no tepidity in the performance of them, betray the secret influence of the lurking distemper? Do no worldly cares and solitudes stifle the good seed which has been sown in your hearts, and prevent it from being productive? Does the consideration of the transcendent perfections of the Most High, of the boundless mercy which he has displayed in your regard, and of the immense reward with which he has promised to remunerate, hereafter, your fidelity in his service, make a corresponding impression upon your minds? Does it inspire you with an ardent zeal for the promotion of his glory? Does it deter you from incurring again his divine displeasure, by a repetition of your past offences against him? Does it instigate you to exercise becoming vigilance over the affections of your hearts, and to subject

them to the control of his holy law? These circumstances, my friends, are deserving of your most serious attention. For how can you be thought to have approached the sacrament of penance with the dispositions requisite for the pardon of sin, if the whole tenor of your subsequent conduct be a contradiction to them? How can you be imagined to have been duly penetrated with that penitential sorrow for your past failings, to have formed those sincere resolutions of amendment, or to have experienced that change and renovation of heart which are necessary to render you fit for the operation of the Divine mercy, if you persist, nevertheless, in the same criminal course, and use not any endeavours to relinquish it? Can he, for instance, be conceived to have truly repented of his habitual neglect of the duty of prayer, who continues to pay little or no attention to that solemn act of religious worship? Can that individual be supposed to have made sincere resolutions to renounce his evil ways, who does not desist from pursuing the same sinful career? who plunges, as before, when occasions present themselves, into all the excesses of sensual gratification? who asperses, as heretofore, the character of his absent neighbour, puts the most unfavorable constructions, or makes him the object of his ridicule and contempt? Or can the heart of that man be justly deemed to have undergone a real change, whose affections remain unaltered, whose hopes, and fears, and desires, and solitudes, are excited

exclusively by terrestrial objects? who, in direct opposition to the admonition of the Apostle, minds not the things that are above, but things that are upon earth? who yields habitually to the secret influence of pride, vanity, resentment, or some other inordinate inclination, and who, instead of being ruled by the principles of the Gospel, suffers himself to be governed by the delusive maxims of the world? No, my friends, that can never be. For, as the tree is to be known from its fruits, so is a knowledge to be acquired of the dispositions of the heart, from the quality of the actions to which they give birth.

Let me not, however, be thought to assert, that every relapse into former sins is an indubitable argument of the deficiency of repentance. Were such the genuine doctrine of Christianity, wretched indeed, in the extreme, would be the condition of poor, weak, degenerate man. For such, alas! is the infirmity of human nature, such its inherent propensity to evil, so strong and numerous are the temptations with which we are encompassed, that the most determined resolutions of the sincerely penitent are no security against a repetition of past transgressions. This our blessed Saviour appears himself to have intimated, who, when St. Peter said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him, as often as seven times?" is recorded in the Gospel to have emphatically replied: "I say not to thee as often as seven times, but even to seventy times

seven times." (MATT. c. xviii. v. 21, 22.) All that I contend for is, that they who have recourse to the sacrament of penance, in proper dispositions,—who are penetrated with sentiments of sincere sorrow, for having offended their best and supreme benefactor,—and whose resolutions to preserve inviolable their fidelity to him, are really such as it becomes them to be, will not be at least indifferent about the observance of his divine ordinances, that they will do their utmost endeavours to be faithful in his service, that they will apply to him for succour to aid them in their exertions, and that, if yielding to the propensities of corrupt nature, they should have the misfortune to incur his displeasure, they will bewail with compunction the deplorable effects of their unhappy frailty, sue for pardon, and exercise in future a more vigilant circumspection over their inconstant hearts. To those who conduct themselves in this manner, it is with exquisite satisfaction I have now to offer a few words of consolation.

Penitent and devout souls, as Christ said to his Apostles the night before his passion, so do I say to you on the present occasion, "Let not your hearts be troubled." (JOHN, c. xiv. v. 1.) No. Let not your hearts be troubled with dispiriting apprehension on account of occasional relapses into your former failings. Those relapses do not by any means prove the insincerity of your repentance. They do not prove that those transgressions, a repetition of which you have occasion to lament,

were not previously pardoned at the tribunal of penance. For sincerity of repentance does not divest you of the infirmities of your nature. It does not secure you from the numerous temptations to which you are exposed. Neither does the God of infinite mercy and goodness, when he grants to humble and penitent sinners the pardon of their offences, impart to them privileges which accord not with man's probationary state, and which are reserved for another period of existence, when the time of trial shall be at an end, and they shall have reached the term of their earthly pilgrimage. He permits them, on the contrary, for the wisest ends, to relapse occasionally into their former transgressions. Yes, he permits them, with a view to their individual interests; he permits them, for the common benefit of that mystic body of which themselves are members; he permits them, even for the manifestation of his own glory. For, did they walk constantly in the way of the Divine commandments, without ever apparently deviating from it in any degree, they might contract, perhaps insensibly, a false notion of their own excellence, which although they might not be themselves aware of it, would render them, nevertheless, more offensive to the sight of God, than the pitiable failings of their imperfect nature. They might, like the proud Pharisee in the Gospel, exalted with lofty opinions of their own righteousness, be disposed to regard the weaknesses of others with too great severity, and the effects of

God's supernatural grace they might be induced to attribute to their own exertions. But when, in opposition to their most determined resolves, they have the humiliation to perceive themselves again seduced by their spiritual enemies from the path of duty, oh! then are they feelingly and experimentally convinced of their own weakness; then does a sense of their own failings dispose them to treat with indulgence the failings of others; and then, too, are they made sensible of the necessity of their dependence on the mercy of Heaven, not only for the pardon of past transgressions, but for their preservation also from those to which in future they may be exposed. Thus, therefore, are the very circumstances on which they ground their apprehensions of guilt unpardoned, converted into means of spiritual improvement, since they tend to produce, by their influence upon their minds, that lowliness of spirit, that mild, tender, and compassionate disposition towards their weak brethren, that perfect reliance on assistance from above, for the success of their endeavours, and that heartfelt gratitude to the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, which are the choicest fruits, and most distinguishing ornaments, of the religion of Jesus Christ. Away then, my pious and worthy friends, away with all those causeless fears which are not less prejudicial to your own interests, than they are injurious to that supernatural grace which is particularly displayed in the pardon of guilt; inasmuch, to use the language of the

Apostle, as "where sin aboundeth, grace aboundeth still more." Let me not, however, be thought to encourage you to commit sin, that grace may abound. I only wish you not to be dispirited by the contemplation of your transgressions. I wish you to place an humble confidence in the boundless mercy of your heavenly Father, who knoweth your frame, who remembereth that you are dust, who is well acquainted with all the difficulties with which your frail nature has to contend, and who will treat your failings in the unequal contest with suitable indulgence. Be vigilant, then, I say, be circumspect,—be strenuous. But let not defeat be productive of dejection. Humble you indeed it well may, and inspire you with diffidence in your own strength. But it should stimulate you at the same time to apply for succour to the throne of the Most High, and with a firm reliance on his divine assistance, to renew the combat with increased vigilance and redoubled energy. And although even your repeated efforts should continue to experience a similar issue, still you must not give up the cause for lost, and retreat pusillanimously from the field of combat. The God of battles, who, from his throne of glory, beholds you struggling in your spiritual warfare, may see, perhaps, that in existing circumstances, an uninterrupted series of victories would be more prejudicial to you than occasional defeat. He may perceive you to be yet too weak to bear the elevation of a complete triumph, and he may permit

you to sustain occasionally a smaller injury in order to prevent a greater. But do you only continue, on your parts, to exert with constancy, your most strenuous efforts, and to sue with earnestness for assistance from above, and you may rest assured that you will be ultimately successful ;—that, notwithstanding your occasional failures, you will be found in the end to have fought a good fight, and that a crown of justice will be the reward of your perseverance.

SERMON XLIII.

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxii. v. 1-14. At that time, Jesus spoke to the chief priests and the Pharisees in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son; and he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage, and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, Tell them that were invited: Behold I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come ye to the marriage; but they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants, The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the high ways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good, and the marriage was filled with guests; and the king went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment; and he saith to him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? but he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters, Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; for many are called, but few are chosen.

By the kingdom of Heaven mentioned in the parable of this day's Gospel, is to be understood the Church of Christ, which is assimilated to a

feast, appointed by a king to celebrate the nuptials of his son, in allusion to the banquet of spiritual blessings with which the eternal Father has graciously condescended to honor the mysterious union of Christ with his Church. The persons first invited to partake of this sumptuous repast, were the Jewish people, to whom the Gospel was originally preached. The servants commissioned to deliver the invitations were the Apostles of Jesus Christ, who were chosen by him to be the ministers of his word. As the individuals, however, in the parable, who were first invited, "neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, whilst the rest laid hands on his servants, and having ignominiously treated them, put them to death," so the Jews, whose minds were wholly absorbed by earthly cares, occupations and pursuits, disregarded the overtures of grace and mercy made to them by the messengers of Heaven, whilst a portion of them offered the most outrageous insults to those chosen heralds of the King of kings, and persecuted them even unto death. But as the king in the parable is represented to have inflicted an exemplary punishment on the perpetrators of the foul and atrocious deeds recorded in it, so did the Sovereign Ruler of the universe cause the wretched inhabitants of Jerusalem to experience, in like manner, a similar effect of his indignation against them, when he employed the armies of the Roman legions as instruments of their destruction, and of the demolition of their

city. The parable next proceeds to give an account of the order issued to the servants by their royal master, to go into the high ways, and there to invite, indiscriminately, whomsoever they should meet, to the banquet, which was now prepared, but of which, those who had been applied to in the first instance, had proved themselves so unworthy to partake. And it describes, moreover, the successful result of their second commission. "Then he saith to the servants, the wedding indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the high ways, and as many as you shall find invite to the wedding. And his servants, going out into the high ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was filled with guests." We have here exhibited to us a striking representation of the directions given to the Apostles to transfer the exercise of their ministry from the Jews to the Gentiles, in consequence of the opposition which they experienced from the former, and which St. Paul and Barnabas distinctly announced to the Jews of Antioch, in Pisidia, in the address they delivered to that obstinate race of men, as it is recorded in the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. "Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly: to you it behoved us first to speak the word of God: but seeing you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord hath commanded us: I have set thee to be the light

of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth." (Acts, *c.* 13. *v.* 46-47.) And the prodigious multitude of the votaries of paganism, who were induced to abandon the worship of idols, and to embrace the pure religion of Jesus Christ, must certainly be allowed to have fully realized the circumstance mentioned in the parable of the wedding being filled with guests. At length, as related in the parable, the king himself, in person, makes his appearance, in order to take a survey of the guests collected together, according to his injunction; when, casting his eyes around him, he descries among them an individual unprovided with a garment suitable to the occasion; and, calling him to an account for his disrespectful conduct, in presuming to present himself in the number of his guests, without being attired in a nuptial robe, the latter being abashed is utterly unable to make any reply. "And the king went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment, and he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? And he was silent." Such, my friends, at the awful day of general retribution, when the Son of Man shall come in great power and majesty to judge the world, will be the confusion of those, who, although they may profess themselves members of the true Church of Christ, are not careful to adorn their profession with corresponding habits of internal holiness. But mark, my friends, mark attentively,

the dreadful close of this important parable, and contemplate in it a lively image of that terrible sentence of condemnation which will consign persons of this description to everlasting perdition. "Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And let the appalling consideration of the concluding declaration of the Gospel, that though many are called upon and invited to embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, yet small, comparatively speaking, is the number of those who actually receive it, or who, if they do receive it, conduct themselves in a manner suitable to their high and heavenly calling, so as to be chosen, or deemed worthy to inherit the kingdom of Heaven, stimulate you to labor, with the assistance of divine grace, to acquire that holy and heavenly frame of mind which will "make your calling and election sure."—"For many are called, but few are chosen."

The parable contained in the Gospel of this Sunday is not less applicable in its circumstances at the present day, than when it was delivered by our blessed Saviour in person, to the Jewish people. Still does the nuptial feast of the Son of the great King of heaven and earth continue to be celebrated amongst us. Still is his mysterious union with his chaste spouse, the Church, accompanied with a banquet of the choicest graces of Heaven for all who have the happiness to be partakers of it. And still are the servants of that

great King, the ministers of his word, commissioned to invite mankind to that celestial repast. This they do by announcing to them the Gospel of his Son, and urging them to a participation of its exalted privileges. But, like the persons mentioned in the parable, of those to whom these gracious overtures are made, some are so deeply immersed in worldly concerns as to be utterly regardless of them. Others, indignant at the restraints attempted to be imposed on their understandings and appetites, by the servants of God, discharge upon them the deadliest venom of their rancorous malignity. Whilst even among those who accept of the invitation, and present themselves as guests at the wedding feast, by cordially embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, too many, it is to be apprehended, are unhappily to be found, who, for want of that internal habit of holiness corresponding to their outward profession, may, with propriety, be said to be destitute of the wedding garment. That such may not be your condition, my friends, when, at the last day, the great King shall take a survey of the guests, and that you may not, in consequence, like the unfortunate man in the parable, “be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” it shall be my endeavour to describe to you the nature of the garment in which you are required to appear in order to partake of that celestial banquet prepared for you in Heaven, and to point out to you the means by which it is to be procured.

In order to form a just conception of the nature of the garment in which it will be necessary to be clothed, to be admitted to a participation of the banquet of the great King in his glorious and blissful mansion, it will be proper to be acquainted with the character of the banquet to which the clothing of the guests is required to correspond. The banquet then, my friends, reserved for you hereafter, in God's everlasting kingdom, will be made to consist of "the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." It will comprise an immense and boundless profusion of unutterable delights, which it is not given to the tongue of man to express, nor to the mind of man to conceive. "To behold *him* face to face," as we are informed by St. Paul, "whom we see at present, but as through a glass, darkly;" to contemplate his admirable and divine perfections, his power, wisdom, goodness, mercy, and every other great and excellent attribute which adorn his nature; to experience those exstatic transports of love, joy, admiration, and gratitude, which the contemplation of a spectacle so sublime and ravishing, will not fail to excite, and with hearts glowing with reciprocal affection, to unite with glorified associates in bliss in sounding forth the praises of your common Lord and supreme benefactor, in sweetest concerts of celestial harmony; such, my friends, is the banquet prepared for you in Heaven, and of which, all of you, without exception, are invited to partake. And what description of robe may

this celestial repast be thought to demand? Why, my friends, we learn from the Scripture itself, that unquestionably it can be no other than that robe of righteousness, which will be the distinguishing ornament of blessed spirits, when united with bodies incorruptible and immortal, they will take their seats at the table of their Lord, to satisfy the cravings of their boundless appetites. For we read in the Apocalypse, that, at the marriage of the lamb, when the nuptials of Christ with his Church shall be celebrated hereafter with joyful festivity in the heavenly Jerusalem, the garment in which his chaste spouse, or the society of the elect will be seen attired, will be of this description. “And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering, and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of the saints.” The wedding garment, therefore, my friends, with which, at the great day of general retribution, you will be expected to be found arrayed to qualify you for the enjoyments of the table of the Lord in his heavenly kingdom, must be a tissue of all those heavenly graces which embellish the souls of the just made perfect. Your inclinations must, in every respect, be similar to theirs. The same pure and ardent love of the adorable Author of their existence, the same conformity to his divine will, the same taste for the sublime pleasures of heavenly contemplation, which are their distinguishing characteristics, must be manifested also by you. Were you suffered to be their associates

with different dispositions, you would disturb the harmony of that blissful society, and introduce disorder into heaven itself. You would even be incapable of enjoying yourselves the refined delights of their delicious repast. For the fruition of the good things of the Lord in the land of the living pre-supposes a relish for those divine objects. And that relish necessarily implies corresponding dispositions.

Such, my friends, is the wedding garment in which it will be necessary for you to appear, in order to be admitted to partake hereafter of that celestial banquet, which God has prepared for his faithful servants in the regions of everlasting bliss. It is a rich contexture of all those good and excellent qualities exhibited to us by our holy religion, and exemplified so conspicuously in the conduct of its divine author. It is by cultivating therefore that holy religion, and by imitating the example of its divine author, that you are to procure the wedding garment mentioned in the parable. Open then that sacred and mysterious volume of the Christian revelation, in which all those good and excellent qualities are so beautifully depicted. Contemplate the comportment of that matchless Being in whose actions they were embodied. There you will behold a bright assemblage of all those virtues with which, as with a wedding garment, you are required to be clothed, to be qualified for admittance to the table of the Lord in his heavenly kingdom. You will there perceive

that it is not only by exercises of piety that you will be authorized to become guests at the nuptial banquet, but that you must procure by your compliance with the will of heaven in every respect the honor of that high and august distinction. "For not every one," said our blessed Saviour, "who saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let me not, however, be thought to depreciate in any manner those sublime acts of religious homage, in which the soul gives vent to its devout affections to the adorable author of its existence. To worship the Eternal Lord of heaven and earth,—to adore him as our creator and the sovereign ruler of the universe,—to acknowledge his absolute sway, and our own entire dependence upon him,—and to pour forth to him our hearts as to our supreme benefactor in the most lively sentiments of love and gratitude, are unquestionably great and important duties which are solemnly prescribed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ: but they are not by any means the only duties which the Gospel enjoins: No. Christianity is of a far more comprehensive nature. Unlimited by the boundaries of time or place, its influence is perpetually and everywhere felt by its faithful votaries. It does not operate by transient, intermitting flashes, which, like lightning from the darkest sky, may burst forth occasionally from the most depraved hearts, but diffuses over all on

whom it shines a clear, steady, and uninterrupted radiance. In a word, my friends, it is an enlarged, constant, and universal, principle of action, directing, regulating, animating, the conduct of those who are devoted to it, at all times, in all places, and in every period and condition of life. If, therefore, my friends, you be truly religious, if you be religious in the real sense and import of the term,—if your religion be of that steady, operative, and extensive character, which marks it to be genuine,—you will feel within you a strong moral impulse, which, in the language of the Apostle, will urge you to the pursuit of “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely.” (PHILIP. *c.* iv. *v.* 8.) And your lives, in short, will be embellished with all those Christian graces denominated in the Apocalypse, the justifications of the saints, of which the wedding garment is a figurative representation. A paramount love of that great Being “who openeth his hand and filleth with his blessing every living creature,” will be the ruling principle of your conduct. It will deter you from whatever may be offensive to him, and prompt you to the accomplishment of his holy will in all things. Your minds will be habitually impressed with an awful sense of his august presence. You will consider his all-pervading eye as fixed incessantly upon you; and you will labor assiduously to recommend yourselves to his approbation by the sanctity of your lives. You will not allow terrestrial objects

to exercise over you an undue influence ; nor will you suffer an inordinate anxiety about worldly things to disturb your quiet. Whatever may be the dispensations of the Almighty in your regard, you will be satisfied with them, knowing them to be devised with infinite wisdom for the accomplishment of the designs of infinite goodness. And you will commit both yourselves and all your concerns with perfect confidence to that great Disposer of every human event, with a full persuasion that, in the language of the Apostle, “ all things will work together (ultimately) for your good.” You will be careful not to abuse the blessings of his providence by intemperate gratification, and submit with resignation to his paternal chastisements. Cultivating likewise diligently that meek, lowly, candid, and benevolent, temper of mind, which the Gospel prescribes, you will cast from you every proud thought, every vain imagination, every low and illiberal prejudice, every angry and vindictive feeling, which it unequivocally condemns. The humiliating conviction of your own weakness will inspire you with sentiments of indulgence for the failings of others. Their disorders you will lament in secret, but you will not expose them to the public view. By friendly counsels, and gentle exhortations, you will endeavour to reclaim them from their evil ways, but you will not exasperate them by the provocations of passion. Nor will you take a malignant pleasure in depreciating the merit of good

actions by odious misconstructions ; you will seek, on the contrary, in the purity of intention, an apology even for those which you are unable to defend. And it will be your delight to contribute by every means in your power to the extirpation of animosities, and to the promotion of peace, agreement, and harmony, among mankind. Such, my friends, are the admirable fruits of the religion of Jesus Christ, when duly cultivated. Such, the effects of those heavenly dispositions, which it fails not to inspire, and which enter into the texture of the wedding garment.

Do not suffer yourselves, therefore, my friends, to be deluded with the false notion that a partial compliance with the duties of religion will be a sufficient recommendation to the favor of the Most High ; that a punctual discharge of one duty will compensate for the neglect of another ; that occasional exercises of piety, for instance, will atone for habits of criminal indulgence. But let an universal obedience to the commands of God, founded on the principle of divine charity, be displayed in your conduct. Thus clothed with the justifications of the saints, as with the wedding garment, in the parable of this day's Gospel, you will graciously be deemed worthy to partake of the enjoyments of that Heavenly banquet which God has prepared for his faithful servants.

SERMON XLIV.

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE SALUTARY INFLUENCE OF AFFLICTIONS ON THE
MINDS OF WORLDLINGS, AND OF THE DISCIPLES
OF JESUS CHRIST.

GOSPEL. *St. John*, iv. v. 46-53. At that time, there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to him, and prayed him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not. The ruler saith to him, Lord, come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him, and they brought word, saying, that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.

A PERSON of distinction, whose son was in imminent danger of death, having tried, it may be presumed in vain, every means which rank and fortune could command, to procure his recovery, applied at length in the last extremity to Jesus, whom he humbly solicited to accompany him to Capharnaum, and to restore his son to health. “And there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was

come from Judea into Galilee, went to him, and prayed him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." This application which the ruler made on the present occasion to our blessed Saviour, was certainly an indication of some degree at least of faith in his supernatural power. But, as the request preferred to him to heal his son was connected with the circumstance of proceeding to the place where his son was, it seemed to intimate a very inadequate notion of its extent. "He prayed him," says the sacred text, "*to come down* and heal his son." Hence are we to account for the reply made to him by Jesus, in the words of the Gospel, "Unless you *see* signs and wonders, you believe not." And to give him to understand that, whether he were present, or whether he were absent, the omnipotence of his will was equally effectual in its operation on the object on which it was employed, he then dismissed him with the comfortable assurance of his son's recovery. "Go thy way," said this divine comforter of afflicted spirits, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And, at the same time, whilst he assuaged the sorrows of a distressed father, he improved, by the influence of grace upon his heart, the imperfection of his faith. "For the man," adds the sacred text, "believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way." And when, at length, he was informed by his servants who met him on the road, that his son's disorder had left him, and that the period of its departure cor-

responded precisely with the time when Jesus announced to him that consoling event, the impression which the intelligence made upon his mind was such, as to lead to the conversion both of himself and of his family to the Christian faith. "And he himself believed," says the Gospel, "and his whole house."

Such, my friends, is the interesting narrative of this day's Gospel, in which we are presented with a striking example of the efficacy of afflictions, in the economy of grace on the mind of an unbeliever. The man, it is probable, had been previously informed of the stupendous prodigies by which Jesus had established the divinity of his mission. He, perhaps, had been himself an ocular witness of them; since Capharnaum, the place where his son lay ill, had been peculiarly favored with the wonderful manifestations of his supernatural power. But, like the generality of the inhabitants of that incredulous city, he had hitherto, it appears, been insensible to their influence. Of the multiplicity of miracles which Jesus had performed at Capharnaum, and of the little effect they had produced on the minds of its inhabitants, we have a remarkable proof in the awful address in which he apostrophized them, and which is contained in the 11th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. "And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which have been done in thee, perhaps it would

have remained until this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." (MATT. *c.* xi. *v.* 23, 24.) Although then, I say, the seeds of grace had been scattered, it may be presumed, in great abundance, upon his heart, yet the soil, hardened by an uninterrupted tenor of worldly enjoyments, had been rendered, in a manner, impenetrable to them, till softened at length by the tears of sorrow which the afflicting situation of his son had caused to flow, it was duly prepared for their reception, when, as we learn from the Gospel, they produced, in the conversion of himself and family, the goodliest fruits. "And he himself believed, and his whole house."

Such, too, my friends, are the effects which afflictions are sometimes observed to produce on the minds of worldlings. They are not unacquainted with the sacred truths of salvation; but, like the ruler in the Gospel, suffer their thoughts and affections to be completely engrossed by worldly pursuits, occupations, and enjoyments. The augmentation of their fortunes, the gratification of their appetites, or the acquirement of distinction, are the sole objects which occupy their attention. For these they pant with unextinguishable ardor. For these they discover an unremitting solicitude. For these they labor with an energy and perseverance which no considerations of difficulties or dangers are suffered to relax; whilst the attainment of everlasting honors, riches

and pleasures in God's eternal kingdom, is no part whatsoever of their concern. But when some grievous calamity befalls them; when God, in his mercy, kindly smites them with some severe chastisement; when an unforeseen accident, or alarming malady, has brought them, perhaps, to the verge of the tomb; when they experience any of those painful wounds, which the loss of fortune, of character, or of friends, is calculated to inflict:—oh! then, do they receive a shock, which quickly operates a most important change in their minds and hearts. They then begin to perceive and to feel the evanescent nature of all worldly possessions and enjoyments. Their thoughts are elevated to the more permanent blessings of a future state; and penetrated with a deep sense of the transcendent importance of those blessings, they have recourse to Jesus for the assistance of his grace, to be enabled to attain them. Nor are their petitions presented in vain. For the same compassionate physician, who is stated in this day's Gospel to have afforded such consolation to a suppliant father, by healing his son when he was at the point of death, fails not to listen with a propitious ear to the earnest cries of repentant sinners who solicit a similar display of mercy in behalf of their poor disordered souls. Being thus released from the deadly malady of guilt, they now enjoy that inward satisfaction and peace of mind, which are the happy consequences of the restoration of their spiritual health, and thenceforth adhere to

their heavenly physician with that lively and practical faith, which manifests itself by their obedience to His Divine ordinances. "And he believed himself and his whole house." Thus are sinners sometimes roused to a sense of religion, and reclaimed from a sinful course of life by the influence of afflictions. I say, sometimes. For this, indeed, unhappily, is not always the case; since many there are whose feelings are become so callous, by the habitual indulgence of their sensual appetites, as to be utterly insensible to the visitations of Heaven. But the inefficacy of afflictions on persons of this description is no depreciation of the mercy of God, in his dispensation of them, as it tends, on the contrary, to place it in a more striking point of view, by exhibiting it in contrast with the obstinate resistance opposed by sinners to its pressing importunities. "Knowest thou not," says St. Paul, "that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God." (Rom. c. ii. v. 4, 5.)

It is not, however, to those alone, who, to use the language of Holy Writ, live, in a manner, without God in the world, and who seldom, or never, extend their views beyond the present transitory scene, that afflictions are calculated to be productive of advantage. No. For even the professed votaries of religion, even they who both believe

the truths of Gospel, and observe its ordinances, derive from afflictions no inconsiderable benefit. For however sincere may be their faith, however assiduous their practice of the duties of Christianity, yet they cannot but be sensible that the corrupt propensities of their nature are apt to beget within them an inordinate attachment to the things of earth—to cool their ardor for the good things of the Lord in the land of the living, and to relax their exertions for the attainment of the great prize which should be the main object of their affections and pursuits. To these corrupt propensities afflictions give a salutary check. They disengage the affections from their undue attachment to terrestrial enjoyments, and fix them on the permanent and pure delights of that Heavenly Kingdom where sorrow never enters, and joy never ends. And when once the hearts of men are feelingly impressed with a lively sense of the inestimable value of those pure and permanent delights, then are they animated with ardent desires to secure to themselves the possession of them. Then do they labor with indefatigable industry to accomplish the supreme object of their wishes. Then do they employ every means in their power to remove the obstacles which may frustrate their exertions. Hence spring fervency and perseverance in prayer for assistance from above, without which they are sensible that their efforts will be ineffectual. Hence that searching scrutiny which they carry into the recesses of

their hearts, to discover and to dislodge every secret disorder or irregularity which hitherto, perhaps, may have remained unnoticed. Hence that watchful and jealous circumspection with which they guard the avenues of their minds against the false maxims and principles of the world. And hence, in short, that religious spirit which does not fail to animate their breasts, and to manifest itself in their conduct, in all the various occupations and pursuits in which they may be engaged. Such, my friends, is the beneficial influence which it is in the nature of afflictions to exercise over the souls of those whose ardor for the promotion of their eternal welfare is damped by their attachment to earthly vanities.

Nor is it only by their salutary operation on the minds of worldlings, and by reanimating the tepid, and rousing them to greater and more vigorous exertions, that afflictions demonstrate their potent efficacy. No. The most exemplary and virtuous Christians must also acknowledge their obligations to them for the opportunities which they afford them of displaying a multiplicity of admirable virtues, which would not otherwise be brought into action. Meekness, humility, patience, forgiveness ; such are the excellent and sublime virtues which they call into activity, and which will procure hereafter, from the great remunerator of merit, an abundant reward. Whatever, in short, my friends, may be the troubles or calamities which may at any time fall to your

lot, of this you may rest assured, that they are all designed by the great Disposer for some beneficial purpose. For they are the dispensations of Him whose measures are at once as replete with wisdom as his ends are stamped with the character of goodness. They are the appointments of the best and most affectionate of fathers, "Who, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, subjects his children," as the Apostle observes, "to a salutary discipline, that they may be partakers of his holiness;" who, by the correction of their failings, and the purification of their virtues, wishes to fit them for the society of the blessed; to qualify them for admission into his parental mansions—into those august mansions of unsullied purity, which nothing defiled can enter,—there to inebriate them with torrents of delight, and to clasp them for ever in the embraces of his love. Surely the consideration of these gracious intentions, entertained in your regard by the wisest, as well as the most bountiful of parents, should reconcile you to the troubles and hardships of your conditions, however painful or distressing they may be.

Remember, likewise, my friends, that whether you bend with submission under the weight of the cross which it may please the Almighty to lay upon your shoulders, or whether you be impatient under its pressure, you are equally compelled to bear it. Now is it not much better to submit with resignation to what must be endured,

than to sustain it reluctantly with unavailing fretfulness? Most assuredly it is. For that calm serenity of mind, which is the effect of resignation to the holy will of God, will contribute greatly to alleviate your sufferings; whilst the tumultuous agitation which accompanies impatience, will tend, in no small degree, to sharpen and to aggravate them. And if you cannot avoid afflictions at present, is it not moreover indisputably your interest to convert them, if possible, to your future advantage? Now this you will most unquestionably do, by your patient submission to the will of Heaven. For you will thus render them subservient to the promotion of your eternal welfare. Since you are assured by St. Paul that "the sufferings of this present time, momentary and light, work for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Is not this consideration, my friends, sufficient to raise your drooping spirits, to infuse into your minds unspeakable consolation, and to shed a cheering lustre over the darkest scenes of life? What disaster is there, however dreadful and tremendous it may be, that may possibly befall you, which can sink you into a state of disconsolate depression, when so exhilarating a spectacle presents itself to your view? Your sufferings, I am willing to allow, may be very great; but the happiness which awaits you in the blessed kingdom of your Father who is in Heaven, you well know, is incomparably greater. The former, you are

aware, must, at no distant period, inevitably pass away. But the duration of the latter will be commensurate with that of your immortal spirits. Let, then, the immensity of that everlasting bliss, be deeply and feelingly impressed upon your minds. Let the unseen things of eternity be rendered in a manner visible to the eyes of your faith. Then every gloomy thought, every bitter reflection, every emotion of impatience, will be absorbed by the joyful and transporting anticipations to which such thoughts will give birth.

As an additional stimulative to your fainting spirits, when you labor under the pressure of severe afflictions, let the animating example of your predecessors in the faith, who have been tried like gold in the furnace of affliction, be the frequent subject of your pious meditations. Fix, stedfastly, your eyes on those intrepid champions of the cross, who fought courageously their way to heaven through a countless variety of hardships and troubles with which they were encompassed. Encouraged by the prospect of the mighty prize which was constantly present to their minds, they not only endured with patience, but they embraced with joy, the tribulations and sufferings of their probationary state. And oh! what a strong and powerful incentive to resignation to the will of Heaven, in afflictions and troubles, does the incomparable conduct of that most perfect model of submissive acquiescence in the divine appointments, the meek and humble

Jesus, exhibit to our view, who, in the words of the Apostle, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God!" Contemplate him, my friends, in the garden of Gethsemane. See him there, fallen prostrate on the ground, and venting, in terms of the most unreserved submission to the will of his Father, the anguish of his soul, whilst drops of blood, issuing from his sacred pores, bear testimony to the intensity of his inward sorrows. Never, no never, surely, was sorrow like unto his sorrow; and yet not a single murmur escaped his lips,—not the slightest emotion of impatience was observable in him. He prayed, indeed, most fervently that, if possible, the bitter cup of his afflictions might be removed from him. But finding that that could not be done consistently with the decree of his Heavenly Father, he bowed with submission to its awful determination. Oh! said he, my Father, if this cup may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done. Such, my friends, should be your conduct in your afflictions and troubles. You may pour forth, like Jesus, the sorrows of your distressed hearts into the compassionate bosom of your heavenly Father, and with similar submission to His holy will, humbly solicit their removal from you. But if, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, he should not deem it expedient to accede to your petition, you should piously submit to the hard trial to

which He may be pleased to subject you ; and, in imitation of your divine Redeemer, prepare to meet it with that fortitude and magnanimity which marked so conspicuously every stage of his unparalleled sufferings, from his agony in the garden to his death upon the cross. You should be careful, at the same time, to apply with confidence to your heavenly Father for his consolation and support. And though he may not send you an Angel from Heaven to comfort and strengthen you, as he did to his beloved Son, yet he will send you one who will abundantly supply his place. He will send down upon you that divine spirit, denominated in Scripture “ the Comforter,” by way of eminence, who having consoled and fortified you during your painful conflict, will secure to you, in the end, a blissful immortality. “ Blessed,” says St. James, “ is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them who love him.”

SERMON XLV.

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xviii. v. 23-35. At that time, Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable, The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants; and when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents; and as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all; and the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him an hundred pence, and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying, Pay what thou owest; and his fellow-servant falling down besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all; and he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him, and said to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst thou not then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? and his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

THE kingdom of God, or the economy of God in the government of his Church, which is exhibited to us in the sacred oracles under a great variety

of aspects, is represented in the parable of this day's Gospel, in a character at once the most awful and engaging. There is not a single incident in this matchless composition which does not speak to the feelings of every heart, and to which the feelings of every heart do not return a corresponding echo. When you behold a mighty sovereign exacting with rigour, from one of his dependants, the full payment of an immense debt which the latter had contracted ;—when you behold that sovereign, on the inability of the poor unfortunate debtor to satisfy his demands, ordering him, in conformity with the existing laws of his realm, to be sold, together with his wife and family, and all his effects ;—you contemplate with dread the severity of the sentence, yet you are compelled, at the same time, to confess its legality. But when you see the same elevated personage touched with compassion at the prostrate attitude, and suppliant address of the poor insolvent,—when you see him replying to his humble entreaty for a temporary respite, by a discharge in full of the whole amount of his immense debt,—how sensibly are you affected by the gracious manifestation of so merciful a disposition, and how naturally do you yield to an act of generosity, so disinterested and sublime, the spontaneous tributes of your admiration and applause ! When afterwards, however, you observe that very individual who had just experienced, in so signal a manner, the effects of his sovereign's lenity and munificence, assailing

one of his fellow-servants with brutal violence, and peremptorily demanding instantaneous payment of a trifling sum which he owed him ; when, unmoved by the posture, and insensible to the solicitations of one who was his equal in point of rank, and who only petitioned for the same indulgence which he himself had so recently implored and obtained from their common master ; when, I say, you view him unaffected by these recollections, and rejecting with pitiless disdain so moderate a request, and consigning the poor petitioner to the horrors of a jail, how is your indignation roused against him ! and how feelingly do you sympathize with those compassionate fellow-servants, who “ seeing,” says the sacred text, “ what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done.” But when, in consequence of that report, you behold the hard-hearted and unfeeling wretch summoned at length into the royal presence, and when you hear the language of severe reproach in which he is accosted by his indignant sovereign, what satisfaction do you then feel, and how cordially do you subscribe to the equity of the sentence pronounced upon him, which his atrocious conduct had so richly merited ! “ Then his lord called him, and said to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me. Shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee ? And his lord being angry, delivered him to

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with our hereditary existence, it must not be dissembled that we have added other debts which are of our own creation. For alas ! my friends, where, amongst all the children of Adam, is that individual to be found, who, if he pass in review the days of his earthly pilgrimage which are now gone by, will not perceive them marked by many a sinful blot, for which he is accountable to the justice of Heaven ? Too many, indeed, there unquestionably are, whom the dismal retrospect would present with a series of foul misdeeds, calculated to inspire them with disgust and horror. And yet no sooner does the unhappy transgressor—no sooner does the most profligate and abandoned of sinners, prostrate himself with humility—like the servant in the parable, before the throne of mercy, and penetrated with sorrow, sue for pardon to Him who sitteth upon it, then, through the powerful intercession of the mighty advocate who has become our surety, and who is ever present to plead our cause, his guilt is cancelled, and he is reinstated in all the privileges of innocence. And shall he who has experienced to so amazing a degree the kind indulgence of propitious Heaven, presume to harbour an implacable disposition to a fellow-creature upon earth ? Shall he, to whom his lord has graciously remitted the immense debt of ten thousand talents, pursue his fellow-servant with unrelenting severity, for the trifling consideration of a hundred pence ? (For no more, in reality, are the greatest offences which it is

possible for one man to receive from another, compared with those which God receives from man ; or more properly speaking, they are incalculably less.) Since if we seriously consider in the two cases, the characters of the persons offended, the relation they bear to the offender, or the offences themselves, we shall perceive in the comparison, that in boldness of effrontery, in violation of relative duty, and in intrinsic malignity, the criminality in one case exceeds, beyond all proportion, the criminality of the other. For in one case we behold in the character of the Being offended the great Omnipotent Creator, preserver and ruler of universal nature ; in the other, a diminutive and hardly perceptible atom in the vast and comprehensive system which he upholds and governs. The relation of one to the offending party, is that of a sovereign, "exalted above the heavens," to an obscure subject on the surface of the earth ; that of the other, of one fellow-creature to another fellow-creature engaged in the service of their common master. The offence, in the first instance, is prodigiously aggravated by every consideration of gratitude, due for a multiplicity of distinguished favors. In the second, it is palliated by the ordinary provocations which stimulate to the perpetration of it. Does it then, I ask once more, does it become man, like the unfeeling servant in the parable, to be so rigorous in the exaction of full satisfaction for every trivial offence he may receive, when, whatever may be the multitude or

enormity of his crimes committed against Heaven, the arms of the Divine mercy are at all times open to embrace him on his repentance?

The offences, moreover, trivial as they often are, which are laid to the charge of the object of resentment, are not unfrequently destitute of foundation. Sometimes they are the offspring of the splenetic temper of the offended individual, construing perhaps a word, a gesture, or even a look, into an intended affront. At other times they proceed from the officious loquacity of the disseminators of mischief, who are for ever employed in sowing the seeds of discord and animosities in the soil of the human heart. But allowing the offences to be real, allowing them to be clearly and incontrovertibly substantiated; allowing them, too, at the same time, to be of a description, calculated beyond every other, to inflict the deepest wounds on every feeling of interest and of honor, known to influence the heart of man, still are they not to be considered as justifications of resentment. For as there is no crime, however black or nefarious it may be, for the pardon of which you are not authorized to hope from God; so there is no injury the forgiveness of which you should not be prepared to grant to man.

But what are those grievous, and, in the estimation of worldlings, unpardonable outrages, which are apt to harden the breasts of men against all the finest sensibilities of their nature? Their property perhaps may have been plundered. Their

reputations may have been traduced. Their persons may have been assailed by blows or insults. Their domestic peace may have been atrociously murdered by the lures of seduction. These circumstances, it must needs be confessed, are severe trials to the best disposed and most relenting tempers. Similar outrages, be it however observed, are daily and hourly offered to God, by the creatures of his hand. For may not depredations be then said to be committed upon God's property, when his unjust stewards apply the goods entrusted to their management to purposes entirely foreign to his interests? When they basely prostitute the faculties of their being to the criminal gratification of their corrupt appetites? Is not his character vilified by the creatures of his hand, when, by their presumptuous confidence, they despise his justice; when, by their hopeless despondency they depreciate his mercy, or by their fretfulness they arraign his providential dispensations? His person, indeed, it is true, is inaccessible to their vain and impotent attacks. But is he not then most grossly insulted, when his adorable name is scandalously profaned by unlawful oaths, imprecations and blasphemies? And, finally, is not the peace of God's domestic mansion completely destroyed, when the Christian heart, that consecrated dwelling of his Holy Spirit, is thrown into disorder by the diabolical allurements of the corrupt principle which lurks within? And yet these outrages, when perpetrated against God,

though, from the various considerations already specified, they are stamped with a degree of turpitude incomparably more enormous than when committed against man, are insufficient, nevertheless, to obstruct the boundless effusions of his mercy. And shall man be inexorable, when God allows himself to be appeased?

Consider, also, my friends, that by cherishing within you a vindictive passion, you become in reality the bitterest enemy of your own repose. For the fermentation which it occasions, aggravates instead of alleviating the anguish of your minds, and consequently a regard for your own ease and tranquillity should prompt you to do your endeavours to suppress it. Think, moreover, on the glory which will accrue to you from a victory gained over your irritated feelings. And when I speak of glory, imagine not that I mean the vain and empty tribute of popular applause. No. I mean that true and solid glory which reason approves, and which religion consecrates: I mean that glory which was a pure source of such heartfelt exultation to the Apostle Paul, when he said:—"Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." Such is the glory which will be the result of your triumph, and which will recommend you to the favor of heaven's eternal King. Add to this the unspeakable consolation, delight, and joy, which you will derive from the consciousness of having sacrificed an angry and malignant passion to a sense of duty,

which will largely indemnify you for the renunciation of its turbulent and criminal gratification. The recollection too of your good deed will calm the disquietude which the retrospect of your past sins has a tendency to create, since “the merciful are pronounced blessed, because they shall obtain mercy.” It will enhance the joys of prosperity, and mitigate the sorrows of adversity. It will contribute to diffuse cheerfulness over the season of health. It will comfort you in the hour of sickness. It will brighten the death-bed scene; and throwing forward its exhilarating beams on your future prospects, it will gild them with the hopes of a blissful immortality.

Banish then, my friends, banish, without delay, a passion from your breasts, which is so little suited to the imperfection of your nature, and which is the enemy both of your present and of your future happiness. Revenge does not befit a sinful creature like man. It is a prerogative which the Omnipotent has reserved to himself. “Revenge is mine, says the Lord of hosts, I will repay.” It is man’s duty to forgive, as he himself expects to be forgiven. If the sacrifice which you are called upon to make, is great, remember it is a sacrifice on which your eternal salvation depends. For you are assured by truth itself,—“that if you forgive not men their offences, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your offences.” Reçollect that when in saying the Lord’s prayer, you present to the throne of mercy your conditional petition for

pardon, with feelings of malice rankling in your breasts, you imprecate the vengeance of Heaven on your own heads. You pray to your heavenly Father not to forgive you, since you refuse yourselves to forgive your offending brother. Do you not shudder at the thought of so direful an imprecation? Is not the consideration sufficient to extinguish in your breasts every spark of resentment against your neighbour? What animating examples of heroic forgiveness do we find recorded in the sacred oracles? How admirable was the tender and affectionate behaviour of Joseph to his brethren who had sold him into slavery! How sublime was the prayer of Stephen in behalf of his inhuman murderers! "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." How divine the conduct of the agonizing Jesus praying for his executioners, in the midst of the most painful and excruciating torments! "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Can you, my friends, resist the powerful influence of such examples as these urging you so forcibly to the exercise of forgiveness? In conclusion, "put ye on, therefore," in compliance with the exhortation of the Apostle, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another, even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also." (COLL. c. iii. v. 12, 13.)

SERMON XLVI.

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OBEDIENCE TO THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxii. v. 15-21. At that time, the Pharisees went and consulted among themselves, how to ensnare Jesus in his speech. And they sent to him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore what thou dost think, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said, Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them, Whose image and superscription is this? They say to him, Cæsar's. Then he saith to them, Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God, the things that are God's.

IN order to form a just notion of the insidious question propounded to our blessed Saviour, as related in the Gospel of this Sunday, it will be proper to observe that the Jews had now been for many years under the dominion of the Romans; and that, as an acknowledgment of that dominion, they paid annually to the Roman Emperor, a pecuniary tribute. Indignant, it may be supposed, at this humiliating mark of national subjection, the Pharisees contended, that to pay tribute to any foreign potentate was to violate their allegiance to the great Jehovah, their sole, rightful,

and exclusive sovereign. Others maintained the opposite opinion, and the Herodians were probably among that number, since Herod, from whom their appellation seems to have been derived, is known to have been attached to the Roman Government. But be this as it may, the embassy sent to Jesus, on the present occasion, consisted, as we learn from the sacred text, of Pharisees and Herodians; who, having professed to him, in flattering terms, their firm conviction of the truth of his doctrines, and of his noble spirit of independence, with a view, we may presume, of emboldening him to an undisguised declaration of his sentiments, they put the following question to him:—"Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" They conceived that by this question, they would reduce him to a dilemma, from which it would not be in his power to extricate himself. But they soon perceived how inadequately they had estimated the vast resources of his capacious mind. For having reproached them with their hypocrisy, in pretending to consult him on a doubtful point, for the satisfaction of their own minds, whilst their real object was to extort from him an answer, which, whether it were given in the affirmative, or in the negative, must unavoidably, as they apprehended, render him obnoxious either to the popular party, or to the friends of the Roman Government, he ordered them to produce the tributary coin. "But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said, Why do you tempt me ye hypocrites?"

Shew me the tribute-money." He then called upon them to say whose image that was which was impressed upon the coin: and having drawn from them a reply, which was virtually an avowal of their submission to the imperial government, and consequently of their obligation to pay tribute to it, he delivered to them his decision, which they could not but perceive to be a just conclusion from their answer to his question. "And he saith to them, Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him Cæsar's. Then he saith to them, Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's."

"Render," said Jesus to the delegates of the hypocritical Pharisees, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's." What? Is the world then divided between God and Cæsar? Or is there any part of the earth which we inhabit that is not subject to the Lord who made it? No, my friends, the world is not divided between God and Cæsar; nor is there any part of the earth which we inhabit that is not subject to the Lord who made it. For "the earth," observes the Psalmist, "is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." But as mighty potentates, whose territories are widely extended, invest with supreme authority individuals among their subjects for the government of distant provinces, whilst they retain the most important part of their territories under their

own direct and immediate jurisdiction ; so the Omnipotent Sovereign of the universe has delegated to earthly rulers the supremacy of dominion in the administration of the affairs of earth, whilst he has reserved exclusively to himself the exercise of his authority over the consciences of men. This the former do from a sense of their own weakness. But God does it from condescension to the weakness of his creatures ; since he well knows that the peace and order of society, which are so necessary to the promotion of their temporal welfare, would not be effectually secured against the inroads and tumults of disorderly passions, were not the, frequently too feeble, barriers of conscience strengthened by the bulwarks of legal restraint. Remember, then, my friends, that in matters of a purely temporal description, you are all conscientiously bounden to obey the constituted authorities of the state in which you live. Such was incontestably the decision which it was the design of Christ to pronounce when he said to the Jewish delegates, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." If he named Cæsar as the specific object of their allegiance, it was because the Roman empire, to which the Jews were at time subject, was governed by a supreme magistrate, who was distinguished by that appellation. But had the Roman Commonwealth been then in existence, his decision would have been substantially the same. It matters not what the form of government may be, monar-

chical, aristocratical, democeratical, or mixed ; if it be the government of the state to which you belong, it has a right to demand your fidelity and allegiance. For it is invested for that purpose with the sanction of the Most High, and to rebel against it is to rebel against God. Such is clearly the doctrine of St. Paul when he says, "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those who are ordained by God. Therefore, he who resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." (Rom. c. xiii. v. 1, 2.) Whether or no resistance be justifiable in extraordinary cases of extreme and insupportable tyranny, when every constitutional means have been tried in vain to counteract it, is a question upon which our blessed Saviour did not deem it wise, or expedient, to enter, in his reply to the Jews, and which, therefore, it would ill become me, at present, to undertake to decide. Suffice it to say, that, constituted as the government of this happy country now is, we have no reason whatsoever to apprehend a case of that description. To you, therefore, my friends, I may safely address the answer given by Christ to the Jewish deputies, in the most unqualified manner: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." As Catholics, it is true, you labored, till a recent period, under a variety of hardships and disabilities, on account of your religious profession. But the consideration of those grievances

would not have justified you in resorting to violent or unconstitutional measures in order to obtain redress. Our blessed Saviour himself distinctly foresaw, and predicted even to his Apostles the calamities and persecutions to which they would be exposed, for the maintenance and propagation of his holy religion ; but he did not urge these evils as motives to revolt against their oppressors. He did not exhort them to have recourse to arms to enable them to shake off the galling yoke, to which he foretold they would be subjected. No. He took, indeed, occasion, from these predictions, to animate them with courage. But it was the passive courage of the Gospel. It was the courage which fortifies to bear wrongs patiently, not that furious and turbulent spirit which instigates to deeds of blood.

To pretend that the heterodoxy of political rulers is a justifiable ground of disobedience to their authority, is a false and seditious doctrine ; and it is as contrary to the principles of genuine Catholicity, as it is hostile to the stability of social order. “ Render, therefore,” says St. Paul, “ to all men their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honor to whom honor.” Now the persons to whom the primitive Christians were commanded to discharge these various duties, were pagan Emperors and Magistrates. They were men who not only adhered themselves to an idolatrous worship, but they were the most determined and

atrocious enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ : and yet the Apostle did not conceive himself authorised, from these considerations, to release the faithful from their allegiance to them. The commission, in fact, which our blessed Saviour gave to his Apostles, and to their successors in the ministry, was similar to that which he had received himself from his Heavenly Father. “ As my Father,” says he, “ hath sent me, so also I send you.” But that commission, which he had thus received from his Heavenly Father, did not, in any manner, relate to temporal concerns. No. It was a commission of a higher, and more excellent order. It was a commission which regarded the everlasting interests of men in a future state of existence. It was a commission to instruct mankind in the doctrines of eternal life—to labor, by persuasion, and the efficacy of example, to establish in the souls of men such virtuous habits and dispositions as might qualify them to become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. And the sole arms which he employed in the execution of it, were the arms of the spirit. Such, my friends, was the commission which Christ received from his Heavenly Father ; and such, consequently, was that which he delegated himself to the ministers of his word. To attribute, therefore, to ecclesiastical rulers, however exalted their dignity in the Church, any right, either direct or indirect, to interfere in the temporal concerns of states, is a doctrine of which no traces whatsoever are to be

met with in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which was unknown to the primitive ages of Christianity ; a doctrine, moreover, which the Catholics of this country have not hesitated repeatedly to disavow.

Be it remembered, however, that the jurisdiction of the state has its prescribed boundaries : that it is only as long as it confines that jurisdiction within those boundaries, that it has a right to command, and that you are conscientiously bound to obey. Should it rashly, therefore, transgress those limits, and, trenching on the sacred rights of conscience, presume to dictate laws in a territory which, in his wisdom, the Eternal has reserved to his own personal administration and government ; and should it, in virtue of that usurped authority, undertake to issue decrees repugnant to the enactments of the rightful Sovereign, disobedience, under such circumstances, far from being in you an act of rebellion, would then become the most sacred of duties.* Then would it behove you to imitate the conduct of the Apostles, who, when forbidden by the Jewish Sanhedrim to preach in the name of Jesus, heroically answered :—" If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye ;" and who, when they were reproached by the same tribunal for their disobedience to its mandates, returned,

* Every prince that believes the truth of religion, must confess that there are reserves in the obedience of subjects, in case his commands should be contrary to the laws of God.—*Vide Burnett's History of his own Times*, vol. 2, 8vo. p. 340.

with unabated courage, a similar reply :—" We ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts. c. v. v. 29.) We, indeed, my friends, at the present day, are not subjected to that severe trial, on account of our religious principles, which it was the hard lot of the Apostles to experience. Time, however, was, when the constancy of our Catholic ancestors was put to this rude test. Like the early champions of the cross, they were authoritatively forbidden to propagate the tenets, or to practise the worship, which had been transmitted to them by their predecessors in the faith ; and like them they peremptorily refused to comply with an ordinance to which their consciences would not allow them to submit. Nor did they, when summoned to expiate this their political sin, by the effusion of their blood, shrink from the task which was imposed upon them. No. They undertook it courageously : and they did their work nobly. They died as blessed martyrs should die. They died entreating forgiveness for their enemies, and invoking blessings on their king and country. Should similar circumstances again occur, behold, my friends, the example which it would be incumbent on you to imitate. But such circumstances, it may well be presumed, will never occur again in a land so justly famed for its humanity and benevolence. The days of sanguinary fanaticism are now gone by, and the sword of persecution is sheathed—sheathed, I trust, for ever.

True indeed it is, as I have already observed, that till a recent period, you labored under a variety of hardships and disabilities on account of your religion. True it is, that some links of that galling chain of barbarous proscription, which our venerable forefathers were condemned to drag, continued till of late to restrain their descendants from the full enjoyment of the constitutional rights of every freeborn Briton. But even these remaining links are off, thanks to the just, wise, and benevolent policy of an enlightened legislature, which did not think it right that conscientious rectitude, that surest pledge of political integrity, should continue to operate as a ground of exclusion from civil offices.

Valuable, however, as the privileges are of which we were formerly deprived, let it never be forgotten, that those which we derive from our inviolable adherence to the faith of our ancestors are incalculably more so; and that to have bartered the latter for the acquisition of the former, would have been a transaction as disgraceful as it would have been injurious to us. Had we been called upon therefore to sacrifice any article of our religious creed, or to consent to measures which would have impaired the integrity, or endangered the security, of the sacred deposit, as the price of our full and complete emancipation, we should not have hesitated a moment to reject the proposal, and we should have comforted ourselves with the reflection, that though debarred from the rights of

citizenship in our country here below, we had preserved at least those of our country which is above, which are of incalculably greater importance, and that we had not traitorously surrendered to Cæsar the things that belong to God.

Yet whilst I exhort you to adhere with firmness to your religious creed, in opposition to every means either of allurement or intimidation, which may possibly be employed to withdraw you from it, it is proper also that I should caution you against that intemperate warmth and acrimony of language in its defence, which a keen sense of unmerited oppression, blended with an ardent, but undisciplined zeal in the cause of religion, is apt too frequently to provoke; and which, without strengthening the cause they are employed to support, give additional animation and vigor to the hostile exertions of its enemies, by irritating their angry feelings. Nor is language of this description less inconsistent with the spirit of true religion, than it is opposed to its interests. Listen to the important admonition of the Apostle, who, after having addressed the Corinthians in the following terms:—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened," immediately adds, "let all your things be done with charity." (COR. *c.* xvi. *v.* 13, 14.) Now charity, observes the same apostle, is patient, is kind, is not provoked to anger, and is consequently incompatible with a mode of proceeding which clearly indicates a temper of mind marked by qualities of an opposite description.

But it is not only with reference to the demands which may possibly be made upon you by the rulers of the state, that I wish to impress upon your minds the important maxim delivered by our blessed Saviour, in the Gospel, of rendering to God the things that belong to God. I am anxious, also, that it should be constantly and habitually present to your thoughts in your intercourse with the world ; and that it should influence, invariably, your conduct through life. Remember then, my friends, that all your powers, whether of mind or body, appertain to God ; that they have been committed to you in trust to be employed in his service, and to be consecrated to his glory. If your affections, therefore, be principally fixed upon creatures—if the honors, riches, and pleasures of the world be the supreme objects of your attachment ; and if to the attainment of them the faculties of your being be exclusively devoted, you render not to God the things which belong to God. Your possessions also, whatever they may be, are all his property, since it is with his instruments, and by his assistance, you have been enabled to acquire them. To prostitute them, therefore, to the gratification of your sensual appetites—to give them up to the demands of pride, vanity, luxury, or any other criminal excess, is not only to withhold them from him to whom they essentially belong, but it is to render them subservient to the promotion of his displeasure. Finally, my friends, all the designs, occupations, and pursuits, which fill up the measure of

your earthly existence, are tributes due to the One Supreme, and, as such, should be faithfully presented to him. This, St. Paul explicitly declares, when he says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." Let these great and momentous considerations, my friends, be imprinted in indelible characters on your minds, and uniformly regulate the tenor of your conduct. Thus will you "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

SERMON XLVII.

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE DISCOURAGING THOUGHTS WHICH MAY PRESENT
THEMSELVES TO THE REPENTING SINNER.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, ix. v. 18-26. At that time, as Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him, saying, Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus rising up, followed him, with his disciples. And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, If I shall touch only his garment I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said, Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a tumult, he said, Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. And when the multitude was put forth, he went in and took her by the hand. And the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.

THE Gospel of this Sunday furnishes us with an account of two signal miracles, wrought by our blessed Saviour in the course of his ministry. The first was the restoration to life of the dead daughter of Jairus, the ruler of a Jewish synagogue, at Capharnaum. The second was the cure of a bodily infirmity with which a woman had been afflicted during twelve years. Both were the rewards of the faith of the individuals in

whose behalf they were performed. The former expressed it by the terms in which he addressed the divine Thaumaturgus :—" Lord, my daughter is even now dead, but come, lay thy hand upon her and she shall live ;" the latter by the sole application of her hand to the hem of his garment. " For she said within herself, if I shall but touch his garment, I shall be healed." But although Jesus condescended to comply with the desire of the woman, by the immediate removal of her complaint,—“ and the woman was healed from that hour,”—yet he did not manifest the same promptitude in acceding to the request of the ruler. He intimated, indeed, by his conduct, that it was his intention so to do, since the text goes on to state, that “ Jesus rising up, followed him with his disciples :” but he did not carry his design immediately into effect ; for proceeding to the house where the corpse lay, he ordered the musicians and the multitude who were with them to withdraw, as funereal lamentations were by no means suited to the situation of one whose death, on account of the shortness of its continuance, he, without impropriety, assimilated to sleep. “ And when Jesus came into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and multitude making a noise, he said, Withdraw, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth.” Misconceiving, however, the meaning of Jesus, as his disciples also did on another occasion, when he employed the same language in speaking of the death of Lazarus, and being fully convinced

that she was actually dead, they treated his remark with derision. "And they laughed him," says the Gospel, "to scorn." But no sooner had they retired, than he vindicated the propriety of the expression which he had used, by awakening the deceased to life. "And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose." So splendid a manifestation of supernatural power would naturally acquire no small degree of celebrity; and, accordingly, the Gospel concludes by informing us, "that the fame thereof went abroad into all that country."

Like the ruler in the Gospel, who, when his daughter was dead, applied to Jesus to restore her to life, every sinner who has the misfortune to behold his immortal soul reduced by sin to a similar situation, should also have recourse to the same Omnipotent Arbiter of life and death, to perform, by his grace, a miracle not less stupendous in its behalf. In language resembling that of the ruler in the Gospel, he should say to him, Lord, my soul is even now dead. But come lay thy hand upon it, and it shall be healed. Yes, my soul, my miserable sinful soul, is deprived, by sin, of the animating principle of spiritual life; but do thou, by the divine influence of thy supernatural grace, cause it to recover the loss it has sustained, or it must be unavoidably buried in that dismal gulph of everlasting perdition, where it will be for ever a prey to the pitiless gnawings

of the deathless worm. Kindle in it, then, I beseech thee, oh !—kindle in it again that vital spark which is now unhappily extinguished, and prevent it from being cast into that dreadful abyss of woe, “where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth.” A petition like this, presented with earnestness to the throne of mercy, will not fail of meeting with a favorable reception : and the same compassionate friend of man, who discovered so significantly his regard to the supplication of an afflicted father, soliciting him in behalf of his deceased daughter, by rising up and following him to the house of mourning, will indicate, by a deportment not less expressive, his attention to the entreaties of a distressed sinner, who may solicit in favor of his unhappy soul a similar display of his boundless mercy. For, as by rising up and following the former, he intimated his design to comply with his request,—so by the encouraging influence of his secret inspirations, with which he will pursue, as it were, the latter, in his solicitude to recover the spiritual life of his soul, he will manifest a disposition to accomplish in his regard that desirable object. But as he did not, in the first instance, restore the ruler’s daughter to life, till the minstrels and the multitude, who were rending the air with their funereal cries, and who rejected with contempt the term employed to convey an idea of the temporary nature of the lifeless condition of the deceased, were removed from the apartment in which the corpse lay ; so neither

will he, in the second instance, reanimate the soul of the sinner, by the quickening influence of his holy spirit, till every gloomy and desponding apprehension of the hopelessness of its condition be expelled from his mind. And in order that he may be induced to banish from his thoughts these unseasonable intruders, like the minstrels and multitude mentioned in the Gospel, it shall now be my endeavour to expose the fallacy of their dispiriting representations.

It sometimes happens, that persons, who at an early period of their lives have been carefully instructed in the principles of Christianity, and who have also been trained up to a faithful compliance with its sacred ordinances, hurried away afterwards by the impetuosity of their passions, and instigated by the example of corrupt worldlings, abandon themselves without restraint to all the excesses of criminal gratification. The impressions, however, of their better days, though they may not be attended to amidst the tumult of their passions, are not effaced from their minds ; and in solitary moments they force themselves upon their attention, and cause them to experience that painful feeling of remorse which urges them to think of relinquishing their sinful course, and of returning once more to the path of duty. In this disposition of mind, they have recourse, perhaps, like the ruler in the Gospel, to their merciful Saviour to deliver their souls from that spiritual death to which sin has reduced them, and to ena-

ble them to walk in newness of life. But a crowd of dismal and discouraging apprehensions is unhappily allowed to occupy their minds,—which, like the minstrels and multitude mentioned in the Gospel, must be resolutely put forth, ere, in compliance with their request, the divine power of Jesus will be displayed in their behalf. They contemplate, indeed, with horror, the wretched state of their disordered souls; they shudder at the thought of that eternity of woes which the principles of their religion, imbibed by them in their early years, admonish them will be their lot, should death arrest them in their sinful career; they tremble, lest in the midst of their criminal transgressions they should be summoned before the bar of inexorable justice; and the disquietudes and alarms which agitate their breasts prompt them to the formation of projects of amendment, and induce them to supplicate, like the ruler in the Gospel, the powerful succour of the world's Redeemer to aid them in their distress. But, alas! they suffer their projects to be blasted, and their supplications to be frustrated, by a variety of suggestions which they harbour in their minds, and to whose desponding representations they are too apt to yield an unbecoming attention. “How,” say these dark and gloomy agents of the prince of darkness, who may be compared with the minstrels and multitude of the sacred text, when they laughed Jesus to scorn,—“How can you imagine that that confirmed state

of spiritual death, in which your souls have been so long engaged, is no more in reality than a temporary slumber, from which the mercy of Heaven will, by your fruitless entreaties for pardon, be induced to release you? How can you persuade yourselves that the anger of God, provoked by your insults, will weakly relent, in condescension to your fears? How can you fancy that his vengeance will be averted by petitions, emanating from no other source than a dread of punishment? No. God, you may be assured, add these cheerless monitors, is not thus to be mocked; nor will he listen with a propitious ear to such unavailing supplications. And granting even, they continue, he were willing to be appeased, yet you well know that he requires, as a preliminary to the forgiveness of sin, a faithful exposition of the disorders of your lives to the minister of reconciliation, accompanied with sentiments of penitential sorrow, and a complete renovation of your hearts. And how can you expect to be able to comply with these conditions? How can you disembroil that confused chaos of accumulated transgressions which deform your souls? How can you bewail, with sincere repentance, crimes which you well know to be still the objects of your secret attachments? Or how can you pretend to reform the dispositions of your hearts, which the inveteracy of criminal habits has rendered, in a manner, unalterable. 'If the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, you also may do

well, when you have learned to do ill.' (JEREMIAH, *c. xiii. v. 23.*) Think, moreover, they subjoin, on the severe, gloomy, and mortified course of life which religion prescribes, in opposition to that gay and cheerful round of festivity and mirth in which, hitherto, you have indulged; and let the consideration of all these circumstances induce you to abandon your projected reformation, as an impracticable undertaking." Such, my friends, are the dispiriting thoughts by which sinners, when awakened to a sense of the disordered state of their souls, are deterred from prosecuting the work of reform. To persons influenced by such dejecting suggestions, I have now to offer the following observations.

Sinners, whom the consciousness of the iniquities of your past lives has inspired with just and reasonable alarms, I wish not by any means to speak peace to your souls. For by such delusive language, by saying to you, "peace, peace, where there is no peace," I should only contribute to the promotion of your ruin. Far from being disposed to mitigate your apprehensions, I am anxious, on the contrary, that they should operate upon you with tenfold energy; knowing, as I do, from the sacred oracles, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But although I mean not to expel your alarms, yet I am desirous of directing them to their proper object. I am desirous that they should rouse you to energetic exertions, and not sink you into the gulph of despondency.

Remember then, sinners, that the God whom you have offended is just and holy ; and that, therefore, it becomes you to dread his judgments. But, remember, at the same time, that he is compassionate and merciful, and that, therefore, it behoves you to hope for pardon : of his willingness to forgive, we have the assurance of his own infallible word :—" As I live, I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live." We have the clearest manifestations of it in the hand-writing which stood against us having been fastened to the cross, as the Apostle observes, and cancelled by the blood of his only-begotten Son. Even the most illustrious inhabitants of the realms of bliss are indebted for their present exaltation and happiness to his transcendent mercy. The guilt of several of those distinguished men is specifically recorded in holy writ, yet the precious blood of the world's Redeemer caused it, on their repentance, to be completely obliterated. And the traitor Judas might have experienced also a similar indulgence, if, instead of abandoning himself to the horrors of despair, he had bewailed, like Peter, his foul misdeed, and thrown himself with confidence into the arms of the Divine mercy.

Be assured, therefore, sinners, that although the greatness and multitude of your crimes should have equalled you in wickedness to the most abandoned reprobate in the dungeon of woe, yet you cease not to be objects of the divine compassion ; and let the remorse which the terrific con-

temptation of your transgressions may, through the influence of Divine grace, have awakened in your minds, be considered as a pledge of the merciful disposition of the Most High in your regard ; as was the conduct of Jesus to the ruler in the Gospel, “ when, rising up, as the text relates, he followed him with his disciples.”

Nor should your apprehension of the difficulties you may have to encounter in calling to your recollection the innumerable sins of your past lives, in order to make an accurate exposition of them to the minister of reconciliation, prevent you from entering on the work of reform. For however great those difficulties may be, yet surely, in the estimation of every rational mind, they must be prodigiously outweighed by the consideration of the immense importance of the undertaking. Let me suppose, for instance, that you were engaged by your condition of life in commercial transactions, and that, by having neglected to keep a regular account of your receipts and disbursements, you had involved your affairs in embarrassments, from which it would not be possible to extricate them, but by restoring order where confusion had so long been suffered to prevail. Would the consideration, I ask, of the difficulties attending the task, deter you from undertaking it ? Would not your conviction of the indispensable necessity of the measure to the promotion of your temporal interests, cause you to disregard the troubles which might accompany the prosecution of it ? And how

incomparably inferior are the fleeting interests of your mortal existence to those of the eternal duration of your being! What an infatuation, then, must it be to allow the former to exercise over you a degree of influence superior to that of the latter? The difficulties, moreover, which you anticipate in the searching scrutiny which there is question of carrying into the recesses of your souls, are exaggerated, it is probable, by your delusive imaginations. In the outset, I confess, they will be very considerable. But take courage. They will decrease sensibly in proportion as you proceed. The mystery of iniquity will be gradually unfolded. The light of Heaven, which will shed its benign influence over your minds, will facilitate your investigation. And the brightening prospect of the happy termination of your perseverance, will exhilarate you in the midst of the scenes of darkness with which you may be encompassed.

As the difficulties attending the examination of your consciences should not cause you to shrink from the prosecution of it, so neither should any remaining inclinations to gratifications, which you are firmly determined to relinquish, be deemed incompatible with sincerity of repentance; nor should the inveteracy of criminal habits impel you to despair of your ability to renounce them. To experience within you emotions of concupiscence; to feel, like St. Paul, "a law in your members, fighting against the law of your minds," is no indication of the insincerity of your repent-

ance. It is the unhappy consequence of that corrupt principle which entered into the constitution of your nature, when man first disobeyed the mandate of his Creator, and will not assuredly be imputed to you as a crime, if, by a deliberate act of your will, you do not yield your assent to its disorderly suggestions. "For if," says the Apostle, "I do that which I will not, I consent to the law, because it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Rom. c. viii. v. 16, 17.) I am well aware, that the power of sin, when its dominion has been strengthened and consolidated in the soul by an habitual submission of the affections of the latter to its tyrannic sway, is not easily destroyed. But I know, at the same time, from innumerable passages in holy writ, by which even the most profligate and abandoned sinners are exhorted to renounce their evil ways, that the enterprise, though arduous, is not impracticable. Vigilant circumspection, determined resolution, energetic exertion, and fervent supplication for assistance from above, such are the measures to which it becomes you to have recourse, and which will infallibly secure to you the most complete success. To stimulate you to adopt these effectual means of shaking off the yoke of your criminal habits, call up to your recollection all those striking and persuasive motives which religion offers to your serious consideration. Think of the transitoriness of sinful gratifications; of their incompetency to afford any heartfelt satis-

faction; of the sting which they leave behind them in the heart of the offender; of the impending vengeance of an insulted Deity, who witnesses your transgressions, and of the danger to which you daily and hourly expose yourselves of being plunged into the gulph of everlasting perdition. Surely these combined and awful considerations, if duly weighed and revolved in your minds, will be sufficient to bear down every opposition calculated in any degree to thwart your efforts in so momentous a concern.

And as to that dark and terrific picture which your fancies are so apt to delineate to you, of a religious course of life, which, in the event of your conversion, it will be incumbent on you to pursue, be assured that it is as unfaithful, as it is odious and repulsive. No, my friends, there is nothing in religion, properly understood, which is of a nature to excite disgust or terror. It imposes, it is true, a salutary restraint on your disorderly inclinations. But in so doing, it contributes, in reality, to the promotion of your well-being. For those irregular appetites, which it tends to repress, are the real causes of that intestine war which is destructive of your inward quiet. Yet whilst it commands you, in the language of the Apostle, "to refrain from carnal desires which war against the soul," it does not forbid the temperate enjoyment of such innocent pleasures and amusements as are deemed conducive to your relaxation and refreshment. Neither the sweets of social inter-

course, nor the merriment of conviviality, nor the more refined gratification resulting from the cultivation of the arts and sciences, are proscribed by it, provided they hold not the chief place in your affections, and be not permitted to interfere with the duties of your respective callings. It opens to you, moreover, other sources of exquisite satisfaction which you would seek in vain from any other quarters. It furnishes the understanding with sublime subjects of contemplation, peculiar to itself; produces in the heart an attachment to objects the most pure and exalted; and causes those who are actuated by its spirit to be superior to all the endless vicissitudes of this ever-shifting and inconstant scene. It connects, in short, the interests of the two worlds together, mitigating the sorrows, and improving the joys, of that which now is, by the heartfelt comforts and ravishing anticipations of that which is to come; thus rendering both heaven and earth subservient to present and to future happiness.

Banish then, sinners, banish from your minds, all those gloomy and desponding thoughts, which, like the minstrels who attended the corpse of the ruler's daughter, would persuade you that your hopes of the restoration of the spiritual life of your souls is visionary and chimerical. Imitate the strong and lively faith so conspicuous in the conduct of the afflicted father; and be assured, that He who restored the daughter of the latter to life, will also raise up your souls from the death

of sin to the life of grace ; and that, if the vital principle thus happily recovered, shall be found to animate them at the period of the dissolution of their earthly tabernacles, they will be exalted by him to a blissful immortality.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROPHECY OF JESUS
CHRIST RESPECTING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE
TEMPLE AND CITY OF JERUSALEM.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxiv. v. 15-35. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, When you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place; he that readeth, let him understand. Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains; and he that is on the house-top, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house; and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat; and wo to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath; for there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been found from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be; and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold I have told it to you before-hand: if therefore they shall say to you, Behold he is in the desert; go ye not out, Behold he is in the closets, believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together; and immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all tribes of the earth

mourn ; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty ; and he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them ; and from the fig-tree learn a parable ; when the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh even at the doors. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

THE portion of holy Scripture selected by the Church for the Gospel of this Sunday, is part of a discourse addressed by our blessed Saviour to his Apostles on the mount of Olives. Being seated, as St. Matthew informs us, on an elevated spot opposite to the hill, on which the temple of Jerusalem was built, and which commanded from the east a fine view of that magnificent structure, he thence delivered to them the celebrated prophecy respecting its destruction, as well as that of the city in which it stood,—a prophecy, which, within the compass of forty years, was afterwards fulfilled with the most perfect accuracy. As the completion of this prophecy appears to me to be an unanswerable argument of the divine foreknowledge of the founder of our holy religion, and consequently of the validity of his high pretensions to the character of Messiah, which he so confidently assumed, I purpose without delay to enter upon a particular and distinct exposition of as much of it as is recorded in this day's Gospel, and to draw from it such reflections as it may obviously suggest.

Our blessed Saviour having specified to his disciples a great variety of remarkable circumstances which were destined to precede the demolition of the city and temple of Jerusalem, directs at length their attention, in the opening of this day's Gospel, to what he terms the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, as the sure sign of that approaching catastrophe. "When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, he that readeth, let him understand." By the abomination of desolation, we are to consider the Roman army with its military standards, on which figures of the emperor and of tutelary deities were to be seen depicted, and to which sacrifices were offered by their idolatrous votaries. The abhorrence in which those abominable objects of heathenish worship were held by the Jewish people, and the devastation and ruin which were their constant attendants, caused them to be distinguished by that significant appellation of "the abomination of desolation." And the holy place in which it is foretold they will be stationed, is meant to denote Jerusalem and its vicinity, which were deemed peculiarly sacred to the God of Israel. That such is the real meaning of this part of the prophecy is perfectly clear from a parallel passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, which may justly be considered as an interpretation of it. "And when," says that Evangelist, "you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then

know, that the desolation thereof is at hand." (LUKE, c. xxi. v. 20.) That this prediction of our blessed Saviour was strictly fulfilled, we learn from the testimony of historians of the highest credit, who inform us, that in consequence of the rebellious conduct of the Jews, the Roman legions did actually enter the sacred territory, and plant their hated banners on that hallowed soil. But how could Jesus, by the mere dint of human sagacity, foretell an event at so great a distance of time, of which, at the period when the prophecy was delivered, there did not exist the smallest degree of probability? Yet he did foretell it; and the earnestness with which he admonished his adherents to flee without delay from the predicted destruction, whilst it proved his accurate knowledge of the event, manifested also his tender regard for the safety of his followers. "Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains." Nor was he content with exhorting them to abandon the wretched country doomed to be the theatre of such unheard of calamities, but with all the earnest solicitude of the most ardent affection, he urged them to disregard every consideration which might occasion the least delay in effectuating their escape from the scene of horrors which he distinctly foresaw, and to direct the whole of their attention and their efforts to the attainment of the grand object of personal security. "And let him that is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house; and let him that

is in the field not go back to take his coat." He compassionated, moreover, the lamentable condition of unhappy mothers, whose departure might be delayed from circumstances peculiar to the situation which he described, and recommended to all the most fervent petitions to heaven that their attempts to avoid the evils with which the nation was threatened to be overwhelmed, might not be impeded either by natural obstacles, or by such as the religious prejudices of the inhabitants might possibly occasion. "And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on the sabbath." The extraordinary earnestness which our blessed Saviour thus manifested for the retreat of his adherents from the land of Judea; the expedition which he so anxiously urged them to employ; the tender solicitude and deep concern with which he contemplated the impediments which might possibly occur to retard their flight, must certainly be allowed to be striking indications of a mind strongly impressed with a prospect of the calamities which he saw impending over the devoted nation. That impression, indeed, he emphatically disclosed in the passage of the Gospel which immediately follows. "For there shall then be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be." The literal fulfilment of this prophecy is attested by an historian of unquestionable veracity. That historian is Flavius Josephus, who

was himself an eye-witness of the facts which he has related ; and who, as he was by nation a Jew, and by sect a Pharisee, cannot be suspected of having harboured a design to favor in any manner the cause of Christianity, to which his religious prejudices rendered him, on the contrary, particularly hostile. That historian then, I say, has, in his preface to the history of the Jewish war, spoken of the calamities which befel the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem in language so similar to that employed by Christ in the passage which I have just cited, that it is impossible not to perceive the resemblance which it bears to it, and to discover in it an authentic testimony to the exact accomplishment of that memorable prediction. “ Our city,” says Josephus, “ of all those subjected to the Romans, was raised to the highest felicity, and was thrust down again to the lowest gulph of misery. For if the misfortunes of all from the beginning of the world were compared with those of the Jews, they would appear much inferior from the comparison.” Are not these terms, in which the Jewish historian has thus recorded the calamitous events of his country as nearly as possible of the same import as those in which our blessed Saviour had previously announced them when he said,—“ there shall then be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be.” And whoever reads a detailed account of the complication of miseries in which that wretched nation

was involved, will certainly not hesitate to subscribe to the truth of the general description which is here given of their deplorable situation. For never surely did such an assemblage of disasters assail at once any other people of this habitable globe. Nor does it hardly seem possible for imagination to conceive a state of wretchedness on this side the grave, exceeding that which Jerusalem exhibited during that dreadful siege, which eventually terminated in its final destruction. Assailed from without by a formidable army of enraged enemies,—distracted within by the desperate fury of contending factions,—a prey to the ravages of famine and of pestilence,—it was exposed to a combination of all the most severe and tremendous calamities which may be deemed perhaps to constitute the extremity of human woe. The number of persons who perished during the siege is without its parallel in the annals of the world. Not less than eleven hundred thousand are computed to have fallen victims to some one or other of the causes which I have specified. And so prodigious was the mortality, that, had the siege been protracted to a considerable length, the utter extermination of the whole Jewish people must have been the unavoidable result. But by the overruling providence of God, who is able to make the passions of men subservient to the accomplishment of his adorable decrees, and who designed the chosen objects of his favor to be preserved from destruction, the duration of the

siege was in reality diminished by the very means which seemed calculated to prolong it. For the fury of the besieged, which augured a long and pertinacious resistance, instigating them to turn their arms against each other, and to set fire to their provisions, contributed not a little to accelerate the conclusion of the final catastrophe. Accordingly, our blessed Saviour distinctly declared, “that unless those days had been shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but that for the sake of his elect, those days should be shortened.”

Having described in terms the most shocking and terrific the future destiny of their unhappy country, he then proceeded to caution his disciples against impostors who would rise up, and who, arrogating to themselves the character of Messiah, and practising a variety of deceitful artifices, would wickedly attempt to delude them to their ruin. “Then if any man shall say to you, lo! here is Christ or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold, I have foretold it to you.” To the accomplishment of this prediction Josephus bears the fullest testimony. For he distinctly states, that great numbers of impostors did actually make their appearance, who flattered the Jews with expectations of deliverance from the Roman yoke, and that too in the identical words employed by Jesus Christ; since, as Christ had predicted, he

relates, that they pretended to shew great signs and wonders. The very places even specified by Christ, as those in which these scenes of imposture were destined to be exhibited, are also marked with sufficient clearness by the Jewish historian, as the places in which the impostors of whom he speaks, deceived their credulous followers by their pretended miracles. Those places are denominated in the Gospel, the desert and the closet. "If therefore they shall say to you, behold he is in the desert, go ye not out : behold he is in the closet, believe it not." Now, in the history of the Jewish war, they are distinguished by Josephus by the same or similar appellations. For the desert was the spot to which these false Christs and false prophets are there related to have conducted their adherents : and one in particular, is represented to have declared to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they were commanded by God to go up to a certain part of the temple, (which the term closet or secret chamber, employed by our blessed Saviour, may be thought to point out,) and that there they should receive signs of deliverance. The historian adds, that six thousand persons were prevailed upon by him to comply with this alleged mandate of the Almighty ; but, that instead of experiencing their promised deliverance, they met their fate. For that part of the temple in which they were assembled, being set fire to by the soldiers, they all either perished miserably in the flames, or in their attempts to escape them.

It was not however in the sequestered retreat of the desert, nor was it within the walls of a secret chamber that the true Messiah was to make himself known. "For as the lightning which cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west, so also, says Christ, shall the coming of the son of man be." Yes, my friends, the lightning which manifests itself so conspicuously to view, by the lurid splendour with which it illuminates the atmosphere, and the effects of which are known to be so dreadful on the objects on which it alights, may well be deemed an appropriate emblem of the appearance of the Son of man displaying in a most public and awful manner, the fierceness of his indignation against the Jewish nation, in the utter demolition of their city and their temple. Nor was the work of destruction to be confined exclusively to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. For, continues the sacred text, "wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together." And accordingly we learn from the same historian, to whom I have so frequently referred, that in whatever part of the country the Jews assembled, thither the Roman eagles bent their flight; and that resembling dead bodies by their total privation of spiritual life, they were abandoned to the fury of the Roman legions, who, with eagles for their standards, like birds of prey were let loose against them to execute the decrees of indignant Heaven.

The subsequent language of this remarkable

prophecy is highly figurative and sublime. "And immediately after the tribulation of these days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved." In order that you may understand this passage, it may be proper to observe in the words of a very learned and sagacious divine,* "that in ancient hieroglyphic writing, the sun, moon, and stars were used to represent states and empires, kings, queens, and nobility, and that their eclipse or extinction denoted temporary disasters, or entire overthrow, &c." The darkness therefore, in which the sun and moon are here represented to be involved, is to be considered as descriptive of the distress and misery with which the nation was doomed to be overwhelmed. The falling of the stars from the firmament may be conceived to imply the expulsion of the Jewish rulers from their seats of government; and the convulsion ascribed to the powers of heaven, the utter abolition of the whole economy, civil and religious, of that devoted nation. How completely this part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, history attests, and we ourselves witness in part at the present day. For from that period to the present time, Jerusalem and the territory of which it was anciently, the metropolis, has been in possession of the Gentiles. The descendants of those who survived

* Bishop Warburton, Divine Legation of Moses.

their country's ruin, no longer united under one form of government administered by themselves, and destitute of the means of performing on their altar that most sacred act of their religious worship, which by the law of Moses, was limited to their temple, have been widely dispersed among the nations of the earth ; and though everywhere blended with the inhabitants of other states, they everywhere appear as a distinct people, bearing the marks of their peculiar origin, as if destined by God to proclaim, by their dispersion, the completion of the prophecy of this day's Gospel. Our blessed Saviour then points out to them, in the desolate state to which the Jewish nation will be reduced, the true sign of the Son of man foretold by the prophet Daniel, and which the Scribes and Pharisees had so frequently called for during the course of his ministry. Very different indeed, he tells them, will this sign be, from that which the Jews were led to expect : for instead of being to them a subject of exultation, it will plunge them into an abyss of the deepest sorrow ; and that illustrious personage to whom they had been accustomed to look forward as to their liberator, from subjection to the Roman yoke, and the restorer of the kingdom of Israel, will appear as it were in the heavens, amidst clouds of terrific majesty, punishing them for their rejection of his overtures of mercy, and their cruel and ignominious treatment of his sacred person. " And then shall appear the sign of the

Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn ; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty." A kingdom, indeed, as the prophet Daniel had foretold, our blessed Saviour unquestionably came upon earth to establish. But he did not intend that that kingdom should be confined exclusively to the Jewish nation. No. He designed it to be an universal kingdom, extending itself from one end of the earth to the other, and comprising the inhabitants of every nation under heaven, who, by embracing his doctrine, should consent to be enrolled in the number of his subjects. And it was with a view to the extension of this spiritual kingdom, that he added, in the verse which immediately follows : " And he shall send his angels with a trumpet, and a great voice ; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens, to the utmost bounds thereof." The angels here spoken of are the ministers of his word, who, in virtue of the commission which they had received for that purpose, distributed themselves over the nations of the earth, and collected from amongst them by their preaching, as by the sound of trumpet, a chosen society of pure adorers of the living God, in spirit and in truth. The approach of summer, continues our blessed Saviour, is not more surely indicated by the appearances of spring, when the trees are clothed with their verdant foliage, and their branches are ren-

dered soft and pliant by the ascending sap, than will the impending destruction of the whole Jewish economy be announced by the disasters which will be seen to precede it. "Now learn a parable from the fig-tree: When its branch is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So also when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

He finally proceeded to point out even the exact period within which these dreadful events were to take place. For he positively declared, and that too with a most solemn asseveration, that they should happen before the extinction of the race of men who were then in existence. "Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be done." And in confirmation of the truth of the prediction which he had delivered, he pledged the stability of his own fixed and unalterable decrees. "Heaven and earth, said he, shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." How completely this part of the prophecy was realized, many who were in being at the time when it was uttered, must assuredly have been able to testify. Since it is an incontrovertible fact, that forty years had not elapsed from that period, before the city and temple of Jerusalem, with the whole system of the Jewish economy were utterly destroyed. On the whole, therefore, it must certainly be confessed by every dispassionate and unprejudiced mind, that the accomplishment of a prediction so clear and circumstantial,

is an undeniable proof of the Divine foreknowledge of its august author, and consequently of the truth of the religion which he taught.

Dreadful, however, as were the calamities experienced by the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem, which, in the Gospel of this day are recorded to have been foretold by our blessed Lord, they were incalculably inferior to those which, in various parts of the sacred scriptures, he has emphatically pronounced against unrepenting sinners. For what comparison is there between the transient sufferings of the unhappy Israelites, severe and terrible as they must be allowed to have been, and the excruciating torments endured by the reprobate in the dismal regions of everlasting woe, where they are represented as victims of "a worm that never dies, and of a fire that shall never be extinguished." But as in the celebrated prediction of this day's Gospel, which our blessed Saviour delivered to his disciples, he graciously condescended to point out the means by which the predicted calamities might be effectually avoided. "Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." So he admonishes sinners to have recourse, in like manner, to a similar expedient, in order that they may escape the wrath to come. Yes, he exhorts them to depart from the dangerous regions of error and iniquity, and to repair without delay to the secure mountains of truth and virtue. Let sinners, therefore, comply with this gracious admonition. Let them not permit any earthly con-

sideration to prevent them from entering immediately on the work of conversion. "Let him that is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house. And let him that is in the field, not go back to take his coat." And should they be yet in the spring or summer of life, let them apply with fervor for the grace of Heaven that they may not be induced to postpone that most important concern to the winter of their days, when the diminution of their energies, and the augmentation of their obstacles, will render it a task of much greater difficulty. "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter." Let them not listen to the suggestions of every upstart teacher, who, heated with fanaticism, or deluded by private judgment, may pretend, as it were, to discover to them the Son of man in the gloomy desert, or in the solitary closet. But let them seek him there where alone he is to be found. Let them seek him in that great universal Church, that illustrious Church of all ages, and of all nations, where his power and his majesty are so conspicuously displayed. There, "being delivered from the hands of their enemies, and serving the Lord in justice and holiness all their days," they will have nothing to apprehend from that extremity of misery which they alone who obstinately persevere in their errors and their vices are condemned to suffer.

SERMON XLIX.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

 ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xxi. v. 25-33. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon them. For the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh; so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.

I EXPOUNDED to you last Sunday the primary sense of that illustrious prophecy of our blessed Saviour contained in this day's Gospel, which I shewed to have experienced its exact accomplishment in the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and of the whole system, both civil and religious, of the Jewish nation. But as is not unusual in prophetic writings, this prophecy is generally thought to have a secondary object in view; and that object is the great day of universal judgment; to which, indeed, the most of the circumstances

appear to be strikingly applicable. In that point of view, I shall therefore now consider it.

It is not by any means improbable, that the great day of the Lord, when he will come to judge the world in righteousness, will be preceded by signs not less awful and terrific, than those which were the forerunners of that day of vengeance, when he rose in his indignation to execute judgment on the Jewish nation. But whatever may be the signs destined to indicate the approach of that solemn day when the world's Redeemer will descend from heaven to judge mankind, and by an irrevocable sentence to fix for ever their unalterable destiny, certain at least it is, that of the reality and manner of his coming, of the nature of the trial which will then be instituted, and of the final issue of it, the Scriptures furnish us with the most authentic documents. For they explicitly assure us, "that the same Jesus, who was taken up into heaven, shall so come as he was seen going into heaven." (Acts, c. i. v. 11.) "That the Sōn of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and that then he will render to every man according to his works." (MATT. c. xvi. v. 29.) "That he shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him; that he shall sit upon the seat of his majesty; that all nations shall be gathered together before him; that he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and that he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the

left." (MATT. c. xxv. v. 31-33.) "That the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 THES. c. iv. v. 15.) "That he shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in a flame of fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 THES. c. i. v. 7, 8.) "That he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and that he will make manifest the councils of the hearts." (1 COR. c. iv. v. 5.) And that the whole procedure of this august transaction will be closed at length by a definitive sentence which will be pronounced respectively on the just and on the wicked, and which will determine their lot for eternity. That to the former he will say: "come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And that he will also say to the latter: depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (MATT. c. xxv. v. 34 41.)

Such, my friends, is the awful account delivered to us by the oracles of eternal truth of that great day of general judgment, which, in a secondary acceptation, the prophecy of our blessed Saviour contained in this day's Gospel, may be conceived to announce. What a grand, and, at the same time, what an interesting scene to every individual of the race of man, does it exhibit to our view! How magnificent will be the spectacle of the

incarnate Son of God, arrayed in all the splendour of the Godhead, and surrounded by myriads of angelic spirits, seated aloft on the throne of his majesty, and sealing for ever, by his irreversible decree, the final destiny of each individual of the human race, of all times, nations, ranks and conditions, from the beginning to the consummation of the world! How striking will be the contrast between the glorious appearance of those who will be stationed on the right hand of the judge, and the hideousness of those who will be placed on the left! How different will be the feelings of these two opposite descriptions of human beings! With what triumphant exultation will the former lift up their heads! And how despondingly will those of the latter be cast down towards the earth! Whilst the glory of the first, and the ignominy of the second, will be a spectacle at once of admiration and of horror to a gazing universe. On which hand of the Judge will it be our lot to take our station at this grand assize, my friends? That we shall all of us be in the number of those who will be there assembled, is an event as fixed as the unalterable decrees of heaven. Yes, my dearly beloved friends, you, my little flock, and I, your most devoted pastor, must all meet together on that great day before our common shepherd. And most fervently do I pray, that on that important day, we may all of us be admitted by that common shepherd into the delightful pastures of life eternal.

But if the sole appearance of the Sovereign Judge will strike such consternation into the hearts of sinners, how will they be affected, when all the manifold crimes of their guilty consciences shall be brought to light, and exposed in their native deformity to their own eyes, and to those of the whole world; “when nothing shall be covered that shall not be revealed, nor hidden that shall not be known!” How will those mighty ones of the earth be abashed and confounded, those scourges of the human race, who have sacrificed the lives of thousands to their own immeasurable and accursed ambition, and whose laurels have been dyed in the blood of their fellow-creatures, when they shall behold that glory which shone so bright in the days of their mortality, now totally eclipsed,—those brilliant achievements, which dazzled with a false lustre the eyes of their contemporaries, emblazoned the historic page, and transmitted their names with honor to remote nations and succeeding generations, now registered in black and indelible characters in that vast volume which will be laid open before them, recorded in it to their eternal shame, and ranged in the foremost rank of vices and abominations which will compose the horrid catalogue of human disorders! How great will be the confusion of the pitiless opulent, whose ears have been deaf to the cries of the distressed, and whose unyielding hearts the tears of widows and of unprotected orphans have assailed in vain! What black and infernal horrors

will overspread the minds of licentious profligates, when they shall see themselves clothed as with a garment, with that hideous complication of loathsome and abominable vices with which they have polluted their immortal souls! And thou, too, false and deceitful hypocrite, who, under the guise of affected sanctity, concealest the most furious and disorderly passions, who imposest at present on the credulity of the unsuspecting by thine outward professions of piety and virtue, and who employest those sacred and venerable names as instruments of thy hypocrisy in the prosecution of thy base and criminal projects, know, that on this great day of general manifestation, thy true character will be brought to light. What confusion will overwhelm thy soul, when put to flight by the irresistible blaze of the divine countenance; all those vain and delusive phantoms of apparent virtue, which diffused a fallacious radiance around thee, shall vanish into air, and lay bare to the great consistory of the universe, the baseness and depravity of thy deceitful heart! Then shall it be seen, that thy pretended zeal in the cause of religion was only a veil to cover thy ambitious and interested designs; that thy munificent donations, perhaps for the support of pious and charitable institutions, were the wretched offspring of contemptible vanity under meek-eyed charity's celestial form; that that ostentatious parade of rectitude and integrity, which caused thee to pass amongst mankind for a man of the highest principle and of the nicest

sense of honor, was no more than a refinement of dissimulation and of perfidy ; and those external appearances of virtue, of whatever complexion they may have been, which contributed to exalt thee in the estimation of the world, were artifices practised by the infernal fiend, when, under the assumed disguise of an angel of light, he carries on in secret his works of darkness. Thy false pretences, therefore, being now completely exposed, thou wilt stand confest to the eyes of the whole universe, in all the horrors of thy intrinsic deformity ; and that odious hypocrisy, to which thou art at present indebted for the concealment of thy crimes, being thus detected, like those artificial colors employed sometimes by the children of vanity to hide the defects of nature, will be found in reality to have aggravated their turpitude.

Think not, my friends, that any excuses will then be admitted to palliate guilt. In vain will sinners then allege the weakness of nature, the strength of the passions, delicacy of constitution or of sex, the violence of temptations, or the multitude of surrounding difficulties. They will be completely refuted by the examples of thousands of the same nature as themselves, and of either sex, who with infirmities as many, and as great as theirs, and with passions full as strong, have resisted with fortitude the temptations to which they were exposed, and pursued with constancy the path of virtue, in spite of every obstacle which opposed their progress. They will be told above all, (and

it will be an unanswerable reply to every possible plea) they will be told, I say, above all, that there existed from eternity a being great and powerful, whose watchful and all-pervading eye was fixed incessantly and stedfastly upon them; a being who was at all times both able and ready to afford them every necessary support, to supply by his grace the deficiency of nature, to curb the impetuosity of passion, to shield them against the influence of temptation, and to inspire them with vigor adequate to the surmounting of the most formidable obstacles, that he had frequently manifested the strongest instances of his good will towards them in the secret inspirations which he had breathed into their souls, and the pressing invitations and encouragements by which he had repeatedly urged them, with all the tender solicitude of an affectionate father to put their trust and confidence in him, but which they, on the other hand, with unpardonable ingratitude had as often disregarded; and that therefore, all their vain excuses, and flimsy pretexts to apologize for their transgressions, have only contributed to thicken the shades of guilt, by causing to be brought to light the indifference or contempt with which they have uniformly treated the signal favors of the Divine bounty. Thus baffled in every attempt to extenuate the turpitude of their exposed vices, to what expedient shall they have recourse? Shall they throw themselves at the feet of their offended judge, and acknowledging with compunction the

enormity of their crimes, beseech him, through the merits of his sufferings and death, to cleanse them once more from their sins, and to blot out all their iniquities? Alas! my friends, in the days of their mortality, that expedient would have proved indeed successful. He would then have listened with the tenderest regard to their supplications and entreaties. Their tears would then have moved to compassion the bowels of his mercy. He would then have graciously purified their souls from every stain or blemish, clothed them with the garb of renovated innocence, and restored them to the dignity of the children of God, whilst the angelic choirs, transported with joy, would have celebrated in concerts of harmony, the wonderful effects of mercy displayed so conspicuously in the conversion of sinners. But the day of mercy is now no more. That of justice and unrelenting severity is at length arrived. The once tender and compassionate advocate is now transformed into an inexorable judge. His ears are now deaf to every entreaty. His breast is inaccessible to every sentiment of commiseration. Nor sighs, nor tears, nor groans, can now induce him to efface from the souls of guilty sinners, those horrid crimes, which will brand them with everlasting infamy as children of wrath, condemned to be for endless ages the victims of Divine vengeance. What shame, what confusion, what anguish, will oppress their souls, when all the iniquities of their lives shall be thus brought forward

against them, and exposed in their most ghastly shapes, whilst every attempt to palliate or excuse them shall have proved fruitless and unavailing ! They shall then “call upon the mountains to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them.” But in vain. More vivid far, and terrible than the livid flash, which shot athwart the gloom of night illumines the horrors of a lowering and tempestuous sky, the light of the Divine countenance will blaze perpetually upon them with indignant glare, and expose to the eyes of the universe the hideous spectacle of their disordered state.

But oh ! how different, how very different, on the other hand, will be the feelings of God’s elect ! That same day, which to the wicked will be a day of so much terror, confusion, and dismay, will be to them a day of unspeakable comfort, exultation, and triumph. The hidden secrets of *their* hearts, as well as those of sinners, will then also be brought to light, and submitted, in like manner, to the public inspection of the general assembly of men and angels, of those chaste and spotless hearts, the internal beauty of which had been concealed during their mortal lives from the knowledge of mankind, in which the Eternal himself had chosen to reside, and which he had delighted to adorn and to enrich beyond measure, with his choicest gifts and graces. Oh ! what scenes of wonder and admiration will be exhibited to the view of astonished beholders, when those impenetrable veils, which hitherto had remained suspended

before those august sanctuaries, shall be drawn aside ! With what raptures of astonishment will they now contemplate the distinguished virtues which will be there displayed ! That strong and lively faith ! That fervor of piety ! That disengagement from all inordinate attachment to creatures ! That scrupulous delicacy of conscience ! That glow of charity ! That heroic fortitude ! That profound humility ! That patience and resignation to the Divine will under all the afflictions, calamities, and distresses, of which the children of poverty have so large a portion in this vale of tears ! Yes, my poor friends, the calamities, afflictions, and troubles, under which it is your hard lot to labor at present, will, if sustained by you with patience and resignation to the Divine will, be classed at the last day, amongst the most honorable badges of distinction, and procure for you immortal honors. Courage then, my poor friends. Be not dejected by the troubles and hardships of your probationary state. In the midst of all your tribulations and sufferings, look forward with comfort to that happy period, when your sighs and groans shall be for ever hushed, when “ your sorrow shall be changed into joy,” and the patient endurance of transitory afflictions shall have worked for you above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.” Then shall it be made to appear, that no object upon earth is more truly great, or worthy of admiration, than a man of solid and unshaken virtue, however lowly

and obscure be his condition. Then shall it be made to appear, that the humble occupations of the daily laborer who wishes to promote in all things the glory of the Almighty, are preferable to all the celebrated achievements of the most renowned heroes, and that they present a spectacle incomparably more pleasing to the sight of the Eternal, than the most brilliant series of victories and conquests, which swell the annals of history, and are recorded in pompous and ostentatious inscriptions on the perishable monuments of human vanity.

The disorders of the wicked, on the one hand, having thus been manifested to the eyes of the whole world, and the virtues of the elect on the other, the judge will then proceed to that awful separation which he will make between them, previously to the sentence by which he will finally seal for ever their unalterable doom. Ye faithful servants of the Most High, who, for the wisest ends, have been laid under the painful necessity of passing through life, blended in a common mass with the impious and ungodly, who, for the trial of your obedience, and the purification of your virtue are sometimes permitted to be treated by them with disdain, to be trampled upon by them, and to experience from their malice the most contemptuous scoffs, reproaches, and insults, reflect with joy on the final separation which will now take place between you, when every tie which connects you together at present, being broken asunder, you shall be associated for ever with the

elect of God; whilst the workers of iniquity linked with the children of wrath and malediction, seeing your happy and glorious condition, shall be troubled with terrible fear :—" saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit,—we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."

The separation being made, and each individual stationed on the part assigned him by his sovereign judge, on his right hand the just, with uplifted eyes immovably fixed on the Author of their deliverance, and displaying in their looks the sweetest sensations of serenity, peace, and joy; on the left the wicked, with sullen and convulsed countenances, exhibiting at once all the mixed and tumultuous emotions of grief, anxiety, terror, and despair; our blessed Lord, with an air of inexpressible majesty, softened by the mild radiance of indulgent mercy, will say to the former, "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Come and receive the reward of your fidelity in my divine service. Come and be inebriated with torrents of pure and inexpressible delights. Come, and in compensation for the momentary crosses and afflictions endured by you upon earth, I will cause you to partake of that promised "joy which no one shall take from you." Turning afterwards to the latter,

with eyes that mark his displeasure, and a voice more tremendous far than peals of loudest thunder, he will fulminate against them that dread sentence of condemnation contained in Holy Writ:—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Depart, begone, and suffer without measure, hope, or end, the punishment due to your crimes and abominations. Depart, and be for ever the unpitied victims of excruciating torments. Depart, and in return for the transient gratifications of your lawless appetites, "the worm which shall never die, and the fire which shall never be extinguished," be your eternal portion. Then shall they be hurled headlong, with irresistible violence, into that unfathomable abyss of woe, "where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" whilst led by the immortal captain of their salvation, and chaunting canticles of jubilation and praise, the just shall proceed triumphant into the bright mansions of everlasting peace and joy. "The wicked," says St. Matthew, "shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."

Permit me now, my friends, after having laid before you the awful scene exhibited in this day's Gospel, to bring it home to your hearts. Remember then, that in the grand trial which I have submitted to your consideration this day, you will each of you be summoned to bear a part; that upon the issue of it will depend infallibly

your unchangeable lot ; that either with the good you will then be placed on the right hand of the Judge, or with the wicked on the left ; that you will be associated with the former in the regions of bliss, or linked with the latter in the regions of despair and misery. I know it will be said that the trial of which I have been discoursing to you is too remote to have much influence on the present age. Whether that, however, be the case or not, none of us, my friends, with certainty, can tell. Should not the rapid decline of faith and piety amongst mankind—the alarming progress of infidelity and libertinism, the great and extraordinary revolutions which have happened within the compass of a few years, induce us rather to suspect that it is less remote than it is generally apprehended to be ? But without pretending to unravel the mysterious designs of Providence, permit me to remind you, that to each individual amongst us, an event is fast approaching, and not far distant, which will be similar in its consequences to that of the coming of the day of the Lord. The event to which I allude, is that of our dissolution. Were a voice at this moment to be heard from heaven, declaring to us that before the close of the ensuing year, the cold hand of death would seize on some amongst us who are here assembled, and consign their bodies to the earth, what, think you, would be the effect which it would produce ? What caution—what assiduity—what circumspection would you not employ to be prepared to meet

so awful an event ? But hark ! By an attentive ear a voice may be this moment heard. Ask you whence it comes ? It comes, my friends, not from the heavens above, but from the earth beneath. It issues from the dark and dreary mansions of the dead. Oh ! it is the awful warning voice of those who but a short time ago were as healthy, perhaps, and as full of life and spirits as the most vigorous amongst us ; who this time twelvemonth were listening, it is not impossible, to the terrors of that dreadful judgment which I have been this day announcing to you. Happy, thrice happy, if they then profited of the salutary admonitions which were communicated to them. They tell us, my brethren, these friendly inhabitants of the tomb tell us, in this their awful warning voice, that before the sun shall have performed its next annual revolution, some of us who are now assembled within these walls, shall experience a like fate ; that some of us shall descend, as they have done, into the gloomy caverns of the earth, encompassed around with the shades of death. Tell me not that I call up unauthorized the prophetic dead to terrify the living with predictions of their fate. If I speak in the language of prophecy, experience is my inspirer, and the grave my voucher. In the ordinary course of nature each preceding year is a prophet to that which follows. What has happened in that which is now drawing to a conclusion, was predicted by the foregoing, and will happen again in that on

which we are about to enter. Influenced by these considerations, let us avoid with caution the ways of sinners, and, with the just, pursue habitually the path of virtue. That dying, like them, the death of the just, we may be stationed with them at the last day on the right hand of the Judge, and that being thus stationed, we may have the unspeakable satisfaction of hearing from His sacred lips that ravishing sentence pronounced in our behalf, which will secure to us an eternity of boundless happiness, "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

SERMON L.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ON THE CHARACTER OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xi. v. 2-10. At that time: when John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples he said to him, Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another? and Jesus making answer said to them, Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them; and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet; yea I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.

THE Gospel of this Sunday furnishes us, in the first place, with an account of ambassadors sent by St. John the Baptist to our blessed Saviour, to obtain from him explicit information on a subject of great importance. Secondly, of the answer which our blessed Saviour returned to them; and, thirdly, of the high eulogium, which, after their departure, he bestowed on the distinguished personage by whom they had been sent. St. John was at this

time in prison, to which he had been committed by Herod Antipas, tetrach of Galilee, on account of the bold and intrepid freedom with which he had censured his incestuous connection with Herodias, his brother's wife. Having been there apprised of the miracles of Christ, he deputed two of his disciples to learn from him if he was in reality that promised Messiah, who had so long been the object of the expectations and desires of the Jewish nation, or if they were still to await the arrival of another, who would make appearance in that character. "Art thou he that is to come, or look we for another?" But was not this a very strange proceeding on the part of the Baptist? During the ceremony of Christ's baptism, which he himself had administered, he had seen "the heavens opened, and the spirit of God descending upon him as a dove, and remaining upon him." He had heard a voice from the same celestial mansions, proclaiming him the beloved Son of the Most High. He had himself borne the most positive testimony to that effect. He had openly declared him to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and publicly acknowledged his superiority to himself to be so great, that he was not even "worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe." And yet we now behold him sending two of his own disciples to this same person, to inquire if he was actually that long-expected Messiah, whom the Heavens may be thought to have demonstrated

him to be, by the strongest appeals both to his eyes and to his ears, and which he may be supposed to have himself professed with his tongue, when, as is related in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, he unequivocally said :—" And I saw, and gave testimony that this is the Son of God." Is not this, I ask, a very perplexing circumstance in the scriptural account which is given to us of the precursor of Jesus Christ? Most certainly it is. Nor have any of the attempts which have been made by commentators on this difficult passage, which have come to my knowledge, been satisfactory, at least to my judgment. The most general solution of the difficulty is, I believe, this ;—that it was not on his own account, but in order to satisfy the minds of his disciples, that the Baptist sent them upon this embassy. But this mode of solving the difficulty is not warranted by the sacred context, which gives no intimation whatever of such design on the part of the Baptist, and which seems rather, from the reply which it states our blessed Saviour to have made, to imply, on the contrary, that his *own* information, and not that of his disciples, was the real object of John's application. " And Jesus," says the sacred text, " making answer, said to them : Go and relate to *John* what you have heard and seen." I have now, therefore, to solicit a candid hearing, whilst, with great deference to the authority of those justly-esteemed and learned interpreters of Holy Writ, who have contributed so

much to elucidate it by their sagacity and erudition, I venture with diffidence to propose an exposition of this embarrassing transaction, which has appeared to me to be less liable to objection than any others which I have hitherto met with. I have to observe then, in the first place, that St. John the Baptist was not acquainted with the character of Jesus till it was notified to him at his baptism, by the descent of the Holy Spirit. Of this we have his own positive assurance. "And I knew him not," says he, "but he who sent me to baptize with water, said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Now in this notification made to St. John by the Spirit of God, of the character of Christ, we find him announced as an illustrious person, appointed by Heaven to be a supernatural source of its choicest graces to the souls of men, as one who was "to baptize with the Holy Ghost;" but we do not perceive the appellation of Messiah bestowed upon him. True indeed it is, that the voice of God proclaimed him to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Nor is it to be denied that the denomination of Son of God was considered by the Jews as one of the distinctive titles of their promised Messiah. And hence, also, I allow, it may be fairly inferred, that in that light Christ was regarded by his precursor, when he said, "and I saw, and gave testimony, that this is the Son of God." But then, it must

also be confessed, that the title of Son of God is frequently applied to other persons as well as to the Messiah. It is oftentimes employed to designate the worshippers of the true God, especially those who serve, respect, and love him as their Father, and who are invariably actuated by his Holy Spirit. "For they," says the Apostle, "who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God." Although, therefore, St. John the Baptist may have originally concluded, from the title of Son of God conferred on him by Heaven, that he was the promised Messiah, yet, as like the rest of the Jews, not excepting even the Apostles themselves, he may very possibly have expected some striking appearances of magnificence and grandeur to accompany that great personage ;—and as no such appearances had hitherto been observable, about the person of Jesus, he may have been led to doubt, not indeed of the divinity of his mission, (for that had been clearly manifested to him by the Spirit of God) but of the correctness of his own interpretation of that heavenly declaration, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And hence may he have been induced to send his disciples to Jesus himself, to be satisfied from his own lips whether or not that declaration was really meant to point him out as the Messiah who was to come. "Art thou he who is to come, or look we for another?" which enquiry may be thus paraphrased. That thou art truly a delegate from Heaven, with a divine commission

to the children of men, is a fact, of which the clearest evidence of the Holy Spirit which accompanied thy baptism has impressed upon my mind a full and unalterable conviction. That thou art moreover that promised Messiah whom the prophets predicted, and to whom the expectations of the nation have been constantly directed, I have been led to *believe* by that solemn declaration from above, proclaiming thee to be the beloved Son of the Most High, which I distinctly heard on the same memorable occasion. But not having hitherto discovered certain external marks which I have been taught to consider as essentially characteristic of that exalted personage, I have been induced to apprehend, that, in this last respect, I may possibly have been mistaken. Wherefore, diffident of my own private judgment, and knowing "that thou art true, and speakest the word of God in truth," I have deemed it expedient to send to thee two of my disciples, in order to know from thine own lips what sentiments I am to entertain on this important subject. And whatever thy decision may be, to that I am fully prepared to submit, with all due humility and respect. Such, my friends, I humbly conceive to be the real meaning of this extraordinary embassy on the part of the Baptist; which may thus, without violence to the text, be perfectly reconciled with his profound respect for the person of Jesus, and his undiminished conviction of the divinity of our Saviour's mission. To this

embassy our blessed Lord replied, not in that cutting and vituperative style in which he addressed the insidious Pharisees, whose object was to perplex and disconcert him, "Why do ye tempt me, ye hypocrites?" but with that cool and temperate frankness and condescension which he conceived to be due to the character of a man ardent in the pursuit of truth, and diligent in his researches for the attainment of it. "Go," said he to the disciples, "and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me." He knew well the sincerity of the Baptist's heart! and therefore was sensible that nothing more could be requisite to satisfy him on the subject of his important enquiry than a plain statement of facts, which the prophet Isaiah had, some hundred years before, attributed to the future Messiah. Of the high estimation in which Jesus held his precursor, we have a striking proof in the language which he employed in speaking of him to the multitude after the departure of his disciples. For no sooner had they left him, than he immediately began to pronounce a lofty panegyric on the eminent qualities of that great man,—on his firm and unshaken constancy,—on his contempt of earthly grandeur and magnificence,—and on his high preeminence above the most distinguished prophets, whose memory was held by

the Jews in the greatest veneration. “And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitude concerning John: What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of Kings. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.”

As the exposition of this day's Gospel has unavoidably occupied so much of the time, to which, as much as possible, I wish to limit my instructions, it shall now be my endeavour, to deliver, with the utmost brevity, the few reflections which I purpose to draw from it. Those reflections I mean to derive from that part of it, in which our blessed Saviour, after an enumeration of his deeds to the disciples of St. John, added these remarkable words, “and blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me.” His meaning was, that happy is the frame of that man's mind, on which the poor, lowly, and mortified condition and demeanour of the blessed Jesus, shall not operate as an obstacle to the recognition of the divinity of his mission. That such was the temper of the Baptist's mind, it would be wrong to entertain the slightest doubt, after the high encomium which Christ himself bestowed on the excellence of his

character. But the case was very different with respect to the generality of the Jewish people. For the minds of the Jews in general were so strongly prepossessed with ideas of external pomp and grandeur which they ascribed to their Messiah, that no superiority of doctrine, no splendour of miracles, no sanctity of conduct, could compensate in their estimation the want of those imaginary characteristics of the holy one of Israel. Hence, whilst Jesus was delivering to them the purest precepts of morality that ever fell from human lips, whilst he was speaking to them "as never man spoke," whilst he was performing amongst them the most stupendous miracles, and exhibiting to them the virtues of his unblemished life, their exclamation was, "how came *this* man by this wisdom, and by these mighty works? Is not *this* the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James and Joseph, and Simon and Jude? And his sisters are they not all with us? Whence then hath *he* all these things? And they were scandalized in his regard," adds the sacred text. (MATT. c. xiii. v. 54-57.) Yes. They were scandalized in his regard. The poor, lowly, and distressed condition of one who was the reputed son of an obscure mechanic, who was born in a stable, and who had not whereon to lay his head, rendered him, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, "a stumbling block and a rock of offence to the two houses of Israel." They could not think of acknowledging a person in these circum-

stances for that great Messiah, whom, from a mistaken interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel, they expected to see coming in the clouds of heaven,—to whom they fondly looked forward as their mighty deliverer from Roman subjection,—as the assertor of their liberties, and the elevator of their nation to a proud degree of power and magnificence unprecedented in the brightest period of its annals.

But far be it from us, my friends, to take offence at that poor, lowly, and distressed condition of the blessed Jesus, which prevented the Jews from recognizing him for their Messiah. Far from us be such unworthy sentiments. Aided by a brighter light, we are enabled to form more just and exalted conceptions of the holy one of Israel, than those which were entertained by the unhappy children of Abraham. We confess him indeed to be our deliverer, but a deliverer from a yoke incomparably more galling than that experienced by the Jews from their subjection to the Romans, even the yoke of the prince of darkness. We hail him as the generous vindicator of our freedom; but a freedom which consists in a liberation from the tyranny of impetuous passions. We venerate him as our promoter to the highest dignity which it is possible for us to attain, even the exalted dignity of children of the Most High. But, for the accomplishment of these mighty objects, it was necessary to remove the gigantic obstacles which were raised up against it. The first of these obstacles was the rigorous justice of an offended Deity demanding

satisfaction for the violation of the laws of his moral government. Till this obstacle was removed, till this iron bar was broken asunder, man could not be rescued from that ignominious thralldom to which sin had reduced him ; he could not receive that supernatural assistance so essential to the vindication of his moral liberty from the ignoble sway of his disorderly appetites ; and instead of becoming a child of God, he was condemned to remain, in gloomy despondency, a degraded child of wrath and malediction. Now, in order to beat down this formidable obstruction, it was indispensably requisite to satisfy the rigor of Divine justice ; and that was not to be done but by an adequate atonement for the guilt of sin. That atonement our immortal Deliverer came upon earth to make. He made it by the poverty, humiliations, and sufferings of a laborious life, closed by a cruel and ignominious death. Well then may he have taken upon himself the form of a slave ; well may he have chosen a wretched stable for the place of his birth ; well may he have been destitute of any fixed habitation ; well may he have submitted to all the scoffs, insults, and indignities, to which he was so frequently exposed ; well may he have suffered himself to be treated as a worm rather than as a man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. Far from being shocked or offended at these humiliating, and, in the estimation of the world, degrading circumstances in the life of our blessed Saviour, we should contemplate them, on

the contrary, as the most appropriate badges of the character which he assumed, and recognize them as marks peculiarly distinctive of the true Messiah, the anointed liberator of a guilty world.

Another obstacle to be surmounted by our divine Redeemer, in order to attain the ends for which he condescended "to be made flesh, and to dwell amongst us," was that deplorable corruption of the human heart, which was the unhappy consequence of man's degeneracy from his pure state of original innocence. That truly melancholy and ever to be lamented event gave, indeed, a most dreadful shock to the constitution of our nature. It produced in it a tremendous revolution, the baneful effects of which are still felt, and will continue to be felt, till the great work of redemption shall have been finally consummated in the completion of the number of God's elect. That tremendous revolution consisted in the lawless rebellion of the passions against the sovereignty of reason, which God himself had established to conduct the administration of his moral government in the freeborn soul of man. This is that corrupt "law in the members," of which the Apostle speaks, "fighting against the law of the mind, and captivating us in the law of sin, which is in the members;" and hence arise those disorderly inclinations, which, in opposition to the clearest dictates of conscience, prompt men to the perpetration of sinful deeds. Now from this disgraceful bondage, from this "servitude of corruption," as the Apostle terms

it, it is absolutely necessary that man be extricated, in order to experience the benefit of his redemption. For in vain did our gracious Deliverer satisfy the justice of his offended Father ; in vain did he crush the head of the infernal serpent ; in vain did he procure for us the exalted privilege of children of the Most High ;—if we suffer ourselves to be debarred from the enjoyment of those advantages, by the ignoble tyranny of our depraved appetites. Hence those excellent and salutary rules of humility, poverty of spirit, and self-denial, presented to us by our divine Saviour in the capacity of legislator ; by the observance of which, we may, in the language of St. Paul, be effectually “ delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” (Rom. c. viii. v. 21.) But with what propriety would our blessed Saviour have prescribed these rules to his followers, had his appearance and conduct been in contradiction with them ? With what congruity would he have told them “ to learn of him, because he was meek and humble of heart ;” to consider the possession of worldly opulence as replete with danger to their immortal souls ; to embrace a life of mortification and self-denial, “ by taking up their cross and following him,”—had he displayed in his person the pomp and pageantry of earthly potentates—had he exhibited in his dwelling the splendour of opulence, and passed his days in luxury and mirth ? Then, indeed, would you have reason to be scandalized ;—then,

indeed, would you have reason to be offended ; and when the ministers of the Gospel exhort you to the practice of those precepts which Christ Jesus has so explicitly inculcated, you might justly appeal from his doctrine to his example, and frustrate the one by the contrast of the other. You talk much to us, you might then say, of the severe injunctions of the Divine Author of the Christian religion—of meekness, and humility, and poverty of spirit, and self-denial, and insist on the necessity of our practice of them : and yet you hold up to us, in the person of him who was the author of those injunctions, a direct contradiction to such doctrines. Shew us, you would add, in him who was the framer of those laws, a corresponding tenor of conduct, and we shall be willing to obey them. But surely it did not become one who was so conspicuously distinguished for all that was ostentatious, sumptuous, and luxurious, to enact regulations of so opposite a description ; nor do we, on that account, conceive him to be entitled to our attention. Well then, my friends, “ behold the man.” Behold the very character you are disposed to demand. Behold in him the most perfect model of the virtues which he inculcated. Behold in him the true sublime he drew. Yes, Jesus, the blessed Jesus, was himself that man. He was himself the first to practice the lessons which he taught. Never were they so completely exemplified as in his divine person. From his birth in a stable, to his death upon Mount Calvary, his

life was one uninterrupted scene of humiliations, poverty, and self-denial. Instead of being offended, therefore, as the Jews were, at his poor, lowly, and mortified appearance and demeanour, let us rather consider that appearance and demeanour as subjects of admiration, and corroborative proofs of the truths of his doctrines. Let us say, with St. Paul, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Let us imitate, assiduously, the conduct of the Baptist, by our unshaken adherence to the principles of the Gospel. Let us leave, like him, to ambitious courtiers, who frequent the palaces of kings, the gaudy trappings of ostentatious vanity. Let us retire, as it were, with him into the wilderness, by retreating occasionally into solitude, particularly at the present season, there to commune with our own hearts, and to prepare the way of the Lord into our souls at the approaching festival of his nativity; that being spiritually born in us, he may grow as it were in us by his grace, till he attain, at length, in the language of the Apostle, "that measure of the stature of his fullness," which may qualify us for the fruition of those exalted blessings in God's everlasting kingdom, which the just made perfect alone are capable of enjoying.

SERMON LI.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

 ON HUMILITY.

GOSPEL. *St. John i. v. 19-28.* At that time : the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and levites to John, to ask him, Who art thou ? And he confessed, and did not deny ; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he said, I am not. Art thou the prophet ? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us ? what sayest thou of thyself ? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. And they that were sent were of the Pharisees ; and they asked him, and said to him, Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet ? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water ; but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not ; the same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

As the Gospel of last Sunday furnished us with an account of an important embassy sent by St. John the Baptist to our blessed Saviour, to enquire if he was in reality the promised Messiah ; so the Gospel of this Sunday informs us of a deputation of Priests and Levites, from the Jewish Sanhedrim, to St. John the Baptist, to learn from his lips in what light they were to consider him, and of the

reply which he made to their enquiries. " And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to him, to ask him, Who art thou?" The reputation for sanctity which St. John had acquired by the austerity of his manners, and the excellence of his exhortations, had raised in their minds exalted conceptions of his character; and as the period was now supposed to have arrived of the appearance of the predicted Messiah among them, they thought that possibly St. John might be that august personage. But, with a sincerity worthy of the Lord's precursor, he disclaimed, without hesitation, all pretensions to that eminent character. " And he confessed, and did not deny : and he confessed, I am not the Christ." Such, however, was the profound respect which the Jewish deputies entertained for his person, that they could not consider him in any other point of view than that of some extraordinary being sent to them from above, to communicate to them the will of the Most High : and as, next to their Messiah, their prophets were the objects of their highest veneration, it naturally occurred to them that he might not improbably be one of the prophets. Accordingly they wished to know if he was not, at least, Elias, or some one of the prophets. But the same upright and honest temper of mind,—the same aversion to dissimulation and hypocrisy,—the same abhorrence of appearing to be what in reality he was not, which prompted his reply in

the first instance, dictated it also in the second, which, like the first, was also an unequivocal disavowal of the dignity with which their imaginations had fondly invested him. "And they asked him," says the sacred text, "what then? Art thou Elias? And he said I am not. Art thou a prophet? And he answered, No." Yet the same dignified disposition of soul, which urged him to reject all claim to distinctions which did not belong to him, stimulated him to assert his real character with becoming firmness. For when he was called upon to state explicitly in what capacity he had come forward, he did not hesitate to proclaim himself to be that very precursor of the Holy One of Israel, whom, at the distant period of eight hundred years, the prophet Isaiah had distinctly foretold. "Then they said to him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah." But in maintaining his claim to that high character which he boldly assumed, he did not wish to exalt it above its just measure, or to arrogate to himself pretensions which it did not warrant. For when the delegated Priests and Levites, whom the Gospel pointedly states to have been of the sect of the Pharisees, appeared to censure him for the use of a ceremony, which they conceived, from his own confession, that he had no right to perform, he took care to inform them that no supernatural

virtue or efficacy was to be ascribed to that ceremony ; that it was no more than a preparatory and emblematical rite, destined only to adumbrate, and to usher in another baptism of a superior order, even the baptism with the Holy Ghost, which it was given to *Him* alone to administer, of whom he himself was no more than a chosen har-binger, commissioned to prepare the way before him ; and who, in dignity and excellence, was so incomparably his superior, that he acknowledged himself unworthy to discharge even the meanest offices in his honorable service. “ And they that were sent, were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him : Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet ? John answered them, saying : I baptize with water, but there hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who was preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.” Such, my friends, is the light in which an attentive perusal of the interesting transaction on the banks of the Jordan, related in this day’s Gospel, has induced me to contemplate it. “ These things,” concludes the sacred text, “ were done in Bethania, where John was baptizing.”

In the Scriptural account which I have thus explained to you of the behaviour of St. John the Baptist, throughout the whole of his interesting interview with the Jewish Priests and Levites, we have a fine picture delineated to us of great-

ness of soul, founded on the basis of true humility. In a garb suited to the subject of his harangues, ("for his garment," says St. Matthew, "was of camel's hair, and he had a leathern girdle about his loins,") John was preaching with ardent zeal the severe doctrine of penance, of which his whole appearance exhibited so striking a figure. The banks of the Jordan, from one end to the other, resounded, it may be presumed, with the fame of this extraordinary man. People assembled in crowds to listen to him; and his disciples, who were numerous, received his instructions as the oracles of Heaven. Yet in his intercourse with the delegates who were deputed to him by the Jewish Sanhedrim, to obtain intelligence of the true nature of his character, John was not disposed to take any undue advantage of the celebrity which he had acquired. "Art thou Christ, or Elias, or some prophet?" Such were the questions propounded to him by these ambassadors. This, my friends, it must be allowed, was, to a man actuated by views of personal aggrandizement, a tempting opportunity to enhance his consequence. But John was humble; and, therefore, to these enquiries, he replied without hesitation that he was neither the Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet. Yet when they urged him to declare plainly his genuine character, he owned himself, without disguise, to be the predicted precursor of Israel's great deliverer. Behold, my friends, the admirable effects of Christian humility. It pre-

vents those who are influenced by it, from aspiring to honors to which they have no just pretensions. It deters them from attempting to raise their reputations on the ignoble basis of popular delusion. It renders them superior to the flattering allurements of contemptible vanity : and instead of prompting them to seek with avidity the empty applause of men, it fires their minds with the nobler and more exalted ambition of obtaining the approbation of the Sovereign of the Universe. Yet, whilst it forbids them to assume a character to which they have no just claim, it authorises them to support their real character with becoming propriety.

Think not, therefore, my friends, that humility is in any manner inconsistent with a decent regard to the peculiar circumstances of your situations in life. No, my friends. Humility is a virtue of a most accommodating description. It courts the alliance of all ranks and conditions. It raises itself up to the highest stations, and lets itself down even to the lowest. It takes its seat on the throne, by the side of the monarch, and dwells with the lowly cottager in his straw-thatched hut. It hinders the first from being elated with the pageantry that surrounds him, and the second from being depressed by the indigence with which he is encompassed. It causes the former to look down without contempt on the poverty of the latter, and the latter to look up without envy on the wealth and magnificence of the former ; and

impressing on the minds of both a deep conviction of God's inexhaustible plenitude, and of man's miserable inanity, it impels them to annihilate themselves in prostrate adoration before the throne of their common Sovereign and supreme benefactor, and to acknowledge their entire dependance upon him. Remember, then, my friends, that whatever may be your rank or condition in life, as you are all of you, like the Baptist, appointed, in your several departments, precursors of the Lord, to prepare his way before him; so, in the discharge of the functions of your sublime commission, it becomes you to imitate his humility. Yes, my friends, to each individual among you is allotted the high office of precursor of the Lord, to prepare his way before him, by endeavouring to remove, within your respective spheres, every obstacle which may oppose his entrance into the hearts of men, and rendering them, as far as may be, fit habitations for his august presence. These important duties you are faithfully to discharge, by your resolute opposition to irreligion and immorality; under whatever form or guise they may present themselves, whether they assume the character of liberality of sentiment, or of honorable ambition, or commercial speculation, or innocent amusement; and by countenancing and encouraging, both by word and example, piety, justice, integrity, disinterestedness, self-denial, meekness, temperance, brotherly love, and every other virtue which the Gospel recommends. Nor

let it be imagined that there is any thing in the assumption of these high pretensions which is not compatible with Christian humility. For you are not to confound humility with that ignoble timidity which is apt to exercise an undue influence over the minds of men—to damp their exertions—to stop their mouths—and to bind, as it were, their hands on occasions when it becomes them to speak with firmness, and act with intrepidity. That is not humility. No. It is pusillanimity, it is cowardice, it is an unmanly fear, an abject diffidence, which frequently has its origin in a very different source from that of humility. For oftentimes beneath the garb of apparent humility, a wretched principle of vanity lurks concealed. Thus do the professed votaries of Christianity frequently hear the sacred cause of religion and virtue insulted and vilified, without uttering a word in its defence, because they are fearful of exposing themselves to ridicule. And thus, too, when it behoves them to adopt decisive measures, and to execute them with resolution, they are frequently observed to remain inactive, from a dastardly apprehension of not succeeding in their attempts, and of experiencing the confusion which they would incur by their failure. But such was not the humility of the Baptist. Such is not the humility of which I speak. No. The humility of which I speak, is of a very different complexion. It is that which Christ himself taught and exercised, and which the apostles practised in imitation of his example. It is a quality

which, by the light both of reason and revelation, discovers to us our own nothingness, and the depth of our misery ; which inspires us with a becoming distrust of ourselves ; which impresses us with a conviction of our own natural indigence and impotence ; which causes us to perceive the injustice of attributing any thing to ourselves but our vices and imperfections, and the propriety of referring whatever excellences we may possibly possess to God, the great original author and munificent donor of every good and perfect gift. The man, therefore, who is truly humble, does not by any means rely upon himself. His sole dependence is upon God ; and the confidence which he reposes in him is strengthened, if possible, by the consoling consideration which he derives from holy writ, that that all-powerful and beneficent Being delights to second the efforts of those who are duly conscious of their own weakness, and to manifest the riches of his mercy and omnipotence in behalf of those who are little in their own eyes. Such, I say, my friends, is the character of that humility of which I speak, and which I most anxiously wish you to cherish, as the only solid basis of the spiritual edifice of vital Christianity. Thus properly and truly considered, it cannot surely be deemed to be in any manner inconsistent with that ardent yet unostentatious zeal in opposing the progress of impiety and immorality, and in promoting the interests of truth and virtue, which, as precursors of the Lord, appointed like the Baptist to prepare

the way before him, it is incumbent on you to display. Should the enemies, therefore, of piety and religion—like the censorious Pharisees in the Gospel, who asked the Baptist what right he had to baptize, if he was not the Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet—call you to a similar account, for discharging, with the intrepidity of conscious rectitude, the sacred duties of that high character with which as Christians you are all of you invested, let not their unjust censures intimidate you into a relaxation of your virtuous efforts. Be careful, however, at the same time, whilst you persist with constancy in your laudable exertions, not to suffer yourselves to be provoked by the sneers and sarcasms of the licentious and profane, to assume a tone of arrogance, and an attitude of superiority, which may subject you to the imputation of spiritual pride. Imitate rather the conduct of the Baptist, who, without relinquishing the office he was ordained to exercise, spoke of it in terms of great humility, whilst the language which he used, in speaking of him whose herald alone he wished to be considered, was that of the most lofty and pompous panegyric. “I,” said he, “baptize (only) with water, but there hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.” Do you, my friends, in a similar spirit, acknowledge freely your weakness and defects. Tell your unjust censors, that you claim not to

yourselves any unwarrantable pre-eminence above the rest of mankind; that in the opposition which you make to immorality and irreligion, and in your defence of the interests of truth and virtue, you act solely from a principle of duty; that you do no more in reality than what you conscientiously believe it were sinful in you to omit; that you pretend to no higher office than that of servant of the same august personage of whom the Baptist was the precursor; that like the Baptist you also acknowledge yourselves to be unworthy to loose even the latchet of his shoe, and that your sole object is to discharge with fidelity the obligations which you have contracted to your divine Master.

Not only, as I have already shewn, is Christian humility perfectly consistent with the most spirited exertions in promoting the interests of truth and virtue, it is, I contend, moreover, the most powerful stimulative to every great and laudable undertaking. Yes, my friends, the mind of the man who is truly humble, is superior to every difficulty. There is no project so vast which he dares not to conceive, and for the accomplishment of which he is not prepared to brave the most formidable dangers, and the severest hardships. His estimation of his strength rises in proportion to his conviction of his weakness. The less he is disposed to confide in himself, the more is his zeal invigorated, and the farther are his views extended. These assertions may seem, perhaps, paradoxical, but I hope to make it appear, that they have their

foundation in truth. For the diffidence which the humble Christian has in himself, is accompanied with a boundless confidence in God. Now he knows, that to God nothing is either impossible or difficult. He knows, moreover, from unquestionable authority, that God delights to manifest his glory in man's infirmity, and that it is to the lowly beyond all others that he communicates his graces in the greatest profusion. Big with these encouraging thoughts, and clad as it were in the omnipotence of God, there is nothing too laborious or painful, nothing too great or sublime, for the daring attempts of his enterprising spirit. He is ever attentive to the voice of duty ; and will present himself, if necessary, before the rulers of the earth with the same freedom as before the meanest of their subjects, prepared alike to imitate the Baptist at the court of Herod, as on the banks of the Jordan. What a stupendous prodigy do we here behold, my friends ! What an admirable union in the same individual do we here discover, of qualities apparently incompatible with each other ; of the most modest diffidence on the one hand, and of the most unbounded confidence and intrepidity on the other ! For in the midst of his most bold and arduous undertakings, his humility never deserts him. He is constantly penetrated with a profound sense of his natural weakness. Yet the animating consideration inculcated to him by the Apostle of the Gentiles, that " he is able to do all things in him that strengtheneth him," invi-

gorates and supports him. And though obstacles of gigantic magnitude may present themselves to his view ; though the opposition he may have to encounter may render the success of his efforts not only extremely doubtful, but to every human appearance, highly improbable, yet he does not despond. But with an elevation of soul superior to every earthly consideration, “ he hopes even against hope.” Nor is the confidence which he continues to cherish, to be regarded as the effect of presumptuous temerity. No. It is founded on that grand and sublime principle laid down by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians,—“ that God chooses the foolish things of the world that he may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world that he may confound the strong, and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not, that he may bring to nought things that are.” (1 COR. c. i. v. 27, 28.) Thus, when that youthful shepherd, who, by a single blow, laid prostrate the mighty Goliath, beheld the enormous stature of the Philistine advancing towards him,—“ thou comest,” said he, “ to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied. But,” continued he, in full confidence of victory, “ the Lord will deliver thee into my hands, and I will slay thee, and take away thy head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the army of the Philis-

tines, this day, to the birds of the air, and to the beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." (1 KINGS, *c.* xvii. v. 45, 46.) Thus also the same David, when surrounded on all sides with implacable enemies, exclaimed, with a holy confidence, " the Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident." (PSALM xxvi.) Such, my friends, every due allowance being made for the difference of circumstances, is the language of those who are truly humble. The less they are disposed to rely on their own strength, the greater is their confidence in the Divine protection. And all anxiety respecting the success of their adventurous undertakings is banished from their minds by the spirit of humility with which they are animated,—which prevents them from apprehending any disastrous consequences that may possibly be the result which, they well know, the Eternal, in his mercy, as well as in his wisdom, sometimes permits to befall his most faithful servants, for the trial of their fidelity and the improvement of their virtue. Shew me a man of the world whose pride would allow him to expose himself so readily to hazards like these. No. He would tremble for the fate of his darling honor. Nor would he be easily prevailed upon to engage in an enterprise which might eventually

terminate in the ruin of his reputation. Not so the man who constantly acts under the influence of humility. No anxious regard for character,—no apprehension of incurring disgrace,—is suffered to operate as a restraint on the great resolves of his exalted, because humble, mind. He is as prompt in decision, as he is vigorous in action. He abandons himself without fear to the unerring guidance of God's holy spirit, prepared to follow whithersoever he may lead, and to submit with resignation to whatever humiliations may fall to his lot.

Think not, my friends, that these observations are the mere visionary speculations of a religious enthusiast. No, my friends, they are not. They have been actually realized, and that too in the most triumphant manner. Was ever enterprise, either in magnitude or extent, to be compared with that of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, when they spread themselves over the nations of the globe, to labor in the conversion of the world to Christianity? It was nothing less than a project to subject all the people of the earth to the dominion of Jesus Christ. The undertaking, according to every human appearance, was extravagant and chimerical; and yet it is well known with what ardor they engaged in it, with what constancy they carried it on, and what extraordinary success attended their mighty efforts. Now who were these Apostles? Who were they? Why, my friends, you all know, that they were men of the lowest class in society, mean and contemptible in

the dialect of the world, but humble in the language of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their humility, however, did not, in any manner, confine their views, it did not contract their hearts, nor did it weaken or check the energy of their exertions. For with this humility working at their hearts, they overran cities, provinces, empires, braved the threats of tyrants and persecutors, resisted the strong, confounded the wise, and in opposition, in short, to every obstacle which it is possible to conceive, gave to the religion of their Divine Master, a firmness and stability, which all the combined powers of earth and hell have never, even to the present day, been able to subvert.

Such then, my friends, being the intrinsic excellence of Christian humility, such the great and admirable effects of which it is productive, cultivate with assiduity this admirable virtue ; and, as it will not fail to recommend you in an especial manner to the favor of the Most High, so in the language of the Apostle, "it will work for you above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Since we are assured by truth itself, that as "he who exalteth himself shall be humbled, so he who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

SERMON LII.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ON PREPARATION FOR THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, iii: v. 1-6. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high-priests Annas and Caiphas; the word of the Lord was made unto John the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins; as it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways, plain: and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

AGAIN, my friends, does the Church of God, in the Gospel of this Sunday, call your attention to the person of St. John the Baptist. Of the importance attached by St. Luke to the office exercised by that extraordinary character, some idea may be formed from the variety of public and notorious circumstances, which he distinctly mentions, as coincident with the period when he entered upon it, as if he sought to remove every shadow of doubt respecting an event of such high moment. These circumstances are not fewer than

six in number. For he states particularly that it was in the fifteenth year of the Roman emperor Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, when Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, when his brother Philip was tetrarch of Trachonitis, when Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilina, and during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiphas. It was at this period, thus clearly and circumstantially described, that, as the sacred text informs us, "the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zachary in the desert." Yes, then it was that the venerable precursor of the world's Redeemer received his commission from above. What that commission was, appears from the subsequent conduct of the Baptist, as it is represented to us in the verse which immediately follows. "And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance, for the remission of sins." The great business of his mission, therefore, was to inculcate to his hearers the absolute necessity of a sincere sorrow for their past transgressions, that their consciences might be purified from the guilt of sin, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was to be received from *him* whose approach the Baptist announced, and of which the baptism administered by himself was no more, in reality, than a figurative representation. That this was unquestionably the meaning of St. John, is clear from the prophetic language in which his father Zachary had previously addressed him, when yet he was in his infancy. "And

thou, child," said his inspired parent, "shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people unto the remission of their sins, through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient (a name characteristic of the Messiah) from on high hath visited us." (LUKE, *c. i. v. 76, 77, 78.*) It was in the discharge of this sublime office, that he was, centuries before, contemplated by the prophet Isaiah; when he was described by him in all the pomp of Eastern imagery, as the distinguished herald of a mighty monarch, commissioned to announce his approaching entrance into his capital; to issue orders for the raising of vallies, the lowering of mountains, the removal of circuitous windings, the clearing away of all roughnesses and inequalities, which might possibly be productive of impediment or inconvenience; and to cause, in short, the road through which the monarch was to pass, to be put in a condition in every respect suitable to the supereminent dignity of so august a personage. "As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: a voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled up. And every mountain and hill shall be brought low. And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

I have no pretensions, my friends, to any ex-

traordinary commission from above, like that with which the Baptist was invested to proclaim to you the counsels of the Most High. Yet let me not be charged with presumption, when I say, that in virtue of that character in which I now stand before you,—like him, I offer myself to you, in some measure, as the Lord's precursor, to prepare the way before him. Ask you on what foundation I establish my claim to be so considered? I answer, on that solid and best of all foundations, the Divine authority of God's infallible Church,—of that Church which was originally established at Jerusalem, which alone is able to produce title-deeds substantiating its constant and uninterrupted connection with that ancient establishment, and which is the sole depository of the jurisdiction of its Heavenly founder, who said to the governors of that Church exclusively, "as the Father has sent me, so also I send you." Such, my friends, is the foundation on which I arrogate to myself a right to address you in terms similar to those in which the Baptist addressed the Jews on the banks of the Jordan. Like him, then, my friends, I now call upon you "to prepare the way of the Lord." Yes, prepare for him a suitable entrance into your hearts at the approaching solemnity of his humble birth. I, indeed, it is true, am no more than a voice, a feeble voice, a voice vibrating only on your ears. But weak and impotent as that voice is, the power of my great God, who delights to manifest the might of his Omnipotence in the

weakness of his instruments, can cause it to penetrate to the very centre of your souls, and to produce in them the most wonderful effects. And may the efficacious influence of his supernatural grace accompany my words, whilst I take occasion, from those of the prophet, applied by the Evangelist to St. John the Baptist, to deliver to you the following exhortation.

“Let every valley then,” I say, “be filled up. Let every mountain and hill be brought low. Let the crooked ways be made straight, and the rough ways plain,” that at the approaching festival of the Lord’s nativity, a free admission may be prepared for him into your hearts. “Let every valley be filled up.” Let your souls be raised from all low cares and solitudes respecting the things of earth, to the contemplation of greater and more sublime objects. Let them, by an humble submission to the Divine appointments, and a spirit of expansive and universal benevolence, be lifted up from that abject state which may cause you to repine at your own lot, and to envy the more prosperous condition of others. Should they be unfortunately sunk to that deplorable depth which is produced by the gratification of sensual appetites, let a salutary practice of mortification and self-denial, restore them once more to their proper level. Children of God, heirs of heaven, candidates for a great and glorious immortality, why will you suffer a wretched anxiety about worldly things, to weigh down to the earth those souls of yours, which should

soar aloft, with a nobler ambition, to objects more worthy of their exalted pretensions? Why will you allow your bright prospects of eternal felicity to be clouded by mists of worldly interests? Or why will you fear, O ye of little faith, when your Father who is in Heaven knoweth all your wants, and is both able and willing to supply them, as far as in his wisdom he judges it to be consistent with your everlasting welfare? Repose a more lively and generous confidence in his paternal goodness. Give him credit for his benevolent intentions in your regard. Abandon yourselves without reserve to the care and protection of his superintending providence. Surely he is well entitled to this unbounded reliance upon him on your part. Surely it is not to be imagined, that he who clothes so magnificently the lilies of the field, and who feeds so abundantly the birds of the air, will be wanting in attention to you who are of much more value than they. Away, then, with all such unworthy distrust, which is as derogatory to the affection of the best of parents, as it is inconsistent with the character of dutiful children. Nor should you permit your souls to be sunk down as it were into vallies of tears, by troubles and afflictions which may attend you in your transit through this sublunary scene. Let those vallies rather be filled up by patience and resignation to the holy will of God. Let the consideration of the sufferings of the "great author and finisher of your faith, who," in the language of the

Apostle, "having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of God," (HEB. c. xii. v. 2) reconcile you to a condition, which assimilates you, in some respect, to your heavenly model. And let the exhilarating thoughts of that "glorious inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for you in Heaven," exalt your spirits to a degree of elevation corresponding with the nature of such lofty expectations. As it becomes you not to brood in sullen dejection over the dark scene of your own distress, so neither should you look with an eye of envy on the prosperity of others. Why, in reality, should you envy them their gleam of sunshine, during life's little day, because you happen to be yourselves in the shade? Are the sufferings which you endure increased by the comforts which they enjoy? Is not God the free dispenser of his gifts? "Is it not lawful for him to do what he willeth? Is your eye evil because he is good?" Instead of repining at your neighbour's prosperity, you should consider it, on the contrary, if he make good use of it, as a real subject of heartfelt congratulation, "rejoicing," as the Apostle exhorts you, "with those who rejoice," and cherish for him a veneration and esteem, as a blessing to the community of which you are a part. But should he abuse it by his criminal excesses, he should then be an object surely of your pity, not of your envy. Let the vallies then, which the corrosion of this baneful passion may have pro-

duced in your souls, be completely filled up by the benevolent spirit of Christian charity ; and let your hearts be expanded by its celestial influence to a generous participation in the happiness of all around you. With respect to those deep and frightful abysses which are excavated in the souls of those who are immersed in the disorders of sensual indulgence, I do not think it expedient, on the present occasion, to do more, than merely to refer persons in this melancholy situation, to the Apostle of the Gentiles, for the means which it becomes them to adopt, in order to fill up those yawning chasms which expose them to the danger of everlasting perdition. “Therefore, brethren,” says St. Paul, “we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die ; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.” (Rom. c. viii. v. 12, 13.)

Not only is every valley to be filled up, but every mountain and hill within you should also be brought low, if you wish your Divine Redeemer to enter into your souls at the festival of his nativity, which we are about to celebrate. The mountains and hills to which I allude, are the mountains and hills of pride ; and in the first place, of reasoning pride, which, revolting against the belief of mysteries incomprehensible to the human understanding, disdainfully rejects them, as demanding of the mind of man an ignoble subjection of its sovereign faculty, to which it conceives it

were degradation in it to submit. But Jesus, the humble Jesus, will never honor with his holy presence the souls of those, where, in the language of St. Paul, he beholds "heights exalting themselves against the knowledge of God;" and which, at the same time, may well be considered as monuments of insult to his own lowliness. There are other mountains and hills of pride, moreover, besides those which are peculiar to unbelievers, which must also be laid prostrate. I mean those which consist in the inordinate estimation of their own excellence, which men are but too apt to form, and which rise to a greater or less degree of altitude in the minds even of those who profess themselves disciples of Him who was "meek and humble of heart." There is no passion, perhaps, so widely diffused, and which manifests itself in such a variety of shapes and features, as that of pride. Pride, indeed, may be said to be an universal passion. Through every rank and condition of life are its ravages, its extravagances, or its follies, to be traced. In one, pedigree,—in a second, wealth,—in a third, external elegance and accomplishments of the body,—in a fourth, the internal endowments of the mind,—and in a fifth, even virtue itself is converted into a foundation of self-complacency. Yet how little reason men have to be proud of any of these things, must be evident to every one who makes them the subjects of his serious consideration. What, in the first place, is pedigree, what is all the glory of a long and bril-

liant line of illustrious ancestors, but an imaginary splendour of human delusion, calculated to dazzle the minds of their descendants, and to make them lose sight of their real origin. But let them look attentively through the perspective of faith, and they will perceive the true source of their original descent. They will perceive it to be in reality a polluted source. They will perceive the stream of their boasted pedigree which has issued from it, to be so deeply impregnated with the impurity of the parent spring, that not all the veins of all their most renowned ancestors, through which it has flowed, have been able to defecate it from the vicious taint. As to wealth or external elegance and accomplishments of body, on which men are apt to ground so unreasonably their self-conceit,—as well might the inanimate works of nature or of art, were it given to them to speak with a human voice, boast in like manner of their superior excellence. As well might the minds of Mexico and Peru glory in the possession of their subterranean treasures ;—as well might the flowers which adorn the fields exult in their variegated tints and fragrance ;—as well might some highly-finished and admired statue, fashioned by the chisel of a Phidias, or Praxiteles, pride itself on its matchless perfections, on the beauty of its features, the expression of its countenance, the proportion of its limbs, the gracefulness of its attitude, and the complete harmony of all its parts. The accomplishments of the mind are, it must be acknow-

ledged, advantages of a higher order. But no one surely will consider them as just foundations of self-esteem, who thinks how suddenly the brightest flame of genius may be extinguished for ever by the breath of Heaven ; how soon the most exalted and capacious mind, enriched with the choicest stores of knowledge, may, by an unexpected visitation from God, be reduced to a state of intellectual imbecility. Nor let virtue itself, though unquestionably the most valuable of human possessions, be regarded as a justification of exalted notions of our own merit. What, in reality, are all the most distinguished virtues of the saints in heaven, or of the saints on earth, but so many emanations from that pure fountain of unblemished sanctity which issues forth from the mountain of God? Which is there among them that you have not received? "And if," observes the Apostle, "you have received, why do you glory as if you had not received it?" Down then with all those lofty sentiments of self-importance, which, as it evidently appears, you have so little reason to indulge. Is there hardly any object which men are accustomed to contemplate with deeper feelings of aversion and disgust than a proud beggar? And are not we all beggars? Are we not all beggars, standing, as it were, and suppliantly begging alms at the door of God's house? Do we not depend upon him for our daily sustenance? Are we not actually in the habit of acknowledging that dependance, when, in the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer, we say

to him, "give us this day our daily bread." Remember then, my friends, that whatever you are, you are what God has made you ; that whatever you have, it is what God has given to you ; that whatever good you do, it is what God enables you to do. Whenever, therefore, you experience temptations to self-conceit, let these considerations present themselves to your minds, and let them induce you to exclaim with the inspired psalmist, "not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory." But to remove, if possible, more effectually from your hearts every disposition to inordinate opinions of your own worth, repair in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem, and there, in that wretched, miserable hovel, contemplate the eternal Word of God, humbled to the condition of a poor, shivering, helpless infant. Truly, my friends, if the view of such incomprehensible humiliation in a being of such transcendent dignity, be not sufficient to cause every mountain and hill of pride which may possibly be within you, to tumble from its basis, I know not what there is that is capable of accomplishing the mighty work, but an extraordinary interposition of that Omnipotent arm "which has pulled down the proud from their seat, and hath exalted the humble."

Besides filling up the vallies which may be sunk in your souls, by the low dispositions or ignoble passions which you may observe within them ;—besides precipitating from its basis every mountain and hill of pride which may present itself to your

view,—you must also make straight every crooked path, if at the solemnity which is at hand you expect your Divine Saviour to enter into your hearts. Yes, you must banish from your souls that crooked policy, those habitual deviations from the straight line of conscientious rectitude, by which worldlings endeavour to accomplish their designs. You must reject those mean and contemptible artifices by which they study to impose upon mankind. You must exclude that winding and circuitous casuistry employed too frequently by persons who profess themselves Christians, to accommodate the unalterable principles of the Gospel to the inordinate cravings of their corrupt propensities. You must cast off that duplicity and dissimulation, manifesting professions of zeal and friendship, whilst indifference, coldness, or hostility, perhaps, is lurking in the heart. And you must avoid that false and unprincipled adulation which is lavished at the expense of honesty and truth. Such, my friends, are the crooked ways which it becomes you to remove, and in the place of which it is incumbent on you to substitute the straight and secure paths of sincerity, candor, and singleness of heart. Think not, however, my friends, that in inculcating this steady and undeviating adherence to rigid principles of unbending rectitude, it is by any means my intention to countenance that sternness of disposition, which, in its laudable attachment to justice and integrity, has no regard for the feelings of the rest of mankind.

That such is not my design, will appear, I trust, from what I am about to offer to your consideration, in addressing you on the subject of the last measure which it behoves you to adopt in order to prepare the way of the Lord for his free ingress into your hearts at the approaching solemnity.

Remember then, my friends, that if you expect the holy Jesus to honor your souls with his Divine presence, you must make, for that purpose, “the rough ways plain.” This you must do by smoothing down those asperities of temper so repugnant to that amiable spirit of meekness which embellished so admirably the whole course of his mortal life. “Tell ye the daughter of Sion,” exclaims the prophet Zachariah, “behold thy king cometh to thee, the just and Saviour, he is meek, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” Yes, Christian soul, thou highly-favored daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh to thee. But remember that he is meek, and that therefore he expects to find in thee a corresponding temper of mind. Meekness, my friends, was a quality which diffused a soft and placid lustre over every other virtue that marked the character of the holy Jesus. In him was strikingly verified the prediction of Isaiah, so justly applied to him by the inspired Evangelist:—“he shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. The bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not extinguish.” (MATT. c. xii. v. 19, 20.) Yes, dear and adorable Jesus,

when I contemplate thee in the performance of thy stupendous miracles,—when I hear thee giving with authority the word of command to the elements, and perceive that word instantaneously obeyed,—when I see thee in the same supernatural manner curing all kinds of infirmities and diseases, and even raising the dead to life,—I am astonished at the wonderful operations of thy power. When I listen to the doctrines which fell from thy sacred lips, I admire thy transcendent wisdom and sublime morality. When I behold thee assuaging the sorrows of the afflicted, and relieving the wants of the distressed, I am delighted with thy compassionate and benevolent tenderness. But when I reflect on the prodigies displayed in thy meekness ; when I behold thee in the garden of Gethsemani, when “thy soul was sorrowful even unto death,” excusing with so much gentleness the apparent apathy of thine own disciples ; when I remark that serenity of mind which thou didst invariably preserve under all the provocations, outrages, and assaults, which it was thy lot to endure from thine enraged enemies ; when, above all, I consider thee in the last affecting stage of thine unparalleled sufferings, whilst suspended by thy wounds in excruciating torments, thou didst pour forth so placidly to thy eternal Father the benevolent feelings of thine unruffled soul, in behalf of thy barbarous and sacrilegious murderers,—who, by their taunts, acclamations, and insulting gestures, were aggravating thine

anguish ; when I meditate, I say, attentively on all these circumstances, oh ! then it is that my feelings are quite overpowered by one mingled sentiment of astonishment, admiration, esteem, gratitude, veneration, and love. Well, indeed, might the contemplation of such astonishing meekness, which he invariably preserved unaltered in the midst of all the provocations and barbarities of his insolent and ferocious enemies, extort from the pen of a celebrated modern infidel,* that eloquent tribute to his Divinity, in the following avowal, that “if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.”

Wherefore, my friends, in conclusion, permit me to avail myself of that pathetic appeal of St. Paul, which in terms highly appropriate to the present topic, he made to the Corinthians : “ Now, I, Paul, myself, beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” (2 COR. c. x. v. 1.) Yes, my friends, by the meekness and gentleness of the blessed Jesus, I beseech you, in the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, “ to put away all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamor, with all malice ; and be you kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven you in Christ, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered himself for us, an oblation to God for an odour of sweetness.” (EPH. c. iv. v. 31, 32.—c. v. v. 2.) Thus will you, in

* Rousseau. *Emile*.

compliance with the injunction of the Gospel, "make the rough ways plain." And thus also, "every valley having been filled up, and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked ways made straight," it will be given to you to see, at the approaching solemnity, "the salvation of God," in the saving influence of that celestial grace which your Divine Redeemer will communicate to your souls.

SERMON LIII.

ON THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

ON THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF ALL EARTHLY GOODS.

“ One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth standeth for ever.” (*Eccles. c. i. v. 4.*)

IN these words of the wise man is exhibited to us a striking representation of the transitoriness of human life. They present us with a spectacle of the various generations of men passing in rapid succession before us, whilst the earth o’er which they are seen to glide, remains unmoved. But is this the sum total of the history of man? Was it for this he was endowed with those vast powers of mind, which enable him to look back upon the past, to contemplate the present, and to anticipate the future? Was it for this, that unextinguishable desire of happiness was implanted in his breast, which nothing on earth is competent to satisfy? Was it for this, that innate expectation of immortality was woven into the contexture of his being? Was it for this, in short, that, as the Psalmist observes, “ he was made by his great Creator little less than the angels, and that he was crowned by him with glory and with honor?” Were all these mighty and immense preparations intended solely

to decorate the fleeting transit of so evanescent an existence? No, my friends, this could never be. God is not so indiscreet a dispenser of his gifts. He distributes his favors liberally, but he distributes them wisely too. And though he sometimes employs the smallest means to attain the most important ends for the manifestation of his power, yet he never has recourse to great ones for the accomplishment of objects of inconsiderable consequence. It is incredible, therefore, that the entire existence of man is confined within the compass of his mortal life. That that, indeed, is by no means the case, we have the positive authority of revelation to convince us, which represents man's present sublunary state as a prelude only to that future condition of his being which awaits him beyond the grave, and destined to prepare him for that exalted degree of happiness, which is there reserved for those who are duly qualified for the enjoyment of it. "For we know," says the Apostle, "if our earthly house of this dwelling be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven." (2 Cor. c. v. v. 1.) The earthly existence of the human race from the beginning to the end of time, may be viewed in the light of one great drama, in which it is given to the generations of mankind to act successively the several parts which are respectively allotted to them. But that drama will be brought at length to a conclusion. Then will the curtain drop; the earth itself, the theatre of the exhibi-

tion, which at present remains unmoved under all the shifting vicissitudes which play upon its surface, will be totally destroyed; and a new heaven and a new earth will be introduced, when the instability attached to temporal things will be done away for ever, and all will be fixed, unchangeable, and eternal. Transient, however, as is the scene of man's earthly existence, and permanent as is that to which he is hastening in his transit through it, yet it is a melancholy truth, that the bulk of mankind are apt to be so fascinated with the tinsel glitter of the former, as to lose sight of the solid and substantial advantages presented to them by the latter, and consequently to neglect that due preparation which is necessary to qualify them for the fruition of them. It is unquestionably therefore a matter of the highest moment to every individual of the race of man, to pause occasionally in his earthly career, in order to dissipate that visionary delusion by which he is liable to be deceived; to impress his mind with a deep sense of the superior excellence of the goods of eternity, and to rectify every error in his dispositions and his conduct, which his giddy thoughtlessness may possibly have occasioned. But what period can be more suitable to the purpose than the present, when the last Sunday of the closing year suggests so naturally the important undertaking, whilst in the words of the text it seems to say, "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth standeth for ever." It shall be

my endeavour, therefore, this day, from a retrospective view of the year which is now drawing to its close, to convince you of the folly of an inordinate attachment to a scene so fugitive as that which it exhibits, to raise your affections to those "glorious things which," in the language of the Psalmist, "are related of thee, O city of God," and to assist you in your examination of your past conduct in relation to these two momentous objects, with a view to the correction of whatever defects so salutary an inquiry may lead you to discover.

In reviewing the preceding events of the now closing year, the first thought which obviously presents itself to the mind is that of the vast number of human beings of both sexes, of all ages, ranks, and conditions, who, during the course of it, have disappeared from the earth. Yes, my friends, when I look back upon the year which is about to expire, men and women, old and young, great and lowly, rich and poor, the learned as well as the unlearned, all seem to pass in long funereal procession before my eyes, and to descend promiscuously into those subterranean caverns which are open to receive them; there, in the language of holy Job, "to sleep in the dust with the great ones of the earth." If you look around you in every direction, how many vacancies will you everywhere discover, which, at the beginning of the yet present year, were filled by your own acquaintances, relations, or friends! How many

vacancies did I say? alas! those vacancies have already ceased to exist. The places of the former occupants are now possessed by their successors, who will abandon them in their turn, as their predecessors did before them, to other tenants at will. For “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth standeth for ever.” The memory of them, however, my friends, remains; and let the solemn recollection of what they were but a short time ago, be an admonition to you of what you, on the other hand, at no distant period, will also be. “We all die,” said the woman of Thecua, whose wisdom is applauded in the second book of Kings, “we all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth.” Yes, my friends, and pursuing the same comparison, I may be permitted to add, that as the waters of the most majestic rivers are confounded with those of the most insignificant streamlets when once they have entered the ocean, so the most honored among the children of men are not to be distinguished from those who have passed their days in unnoticed obscurity, when both have descended into the tomb.

Such, then, my friends, being the shortness and uncertainty of human life,—such the conclusion in which it terminates,—can its transient, inconstant, and evanescent advantages, be deemed worthy of the supreme attachment of a rational being? What then? it may, perhaps, be said, are we to go sighing, and groaning, and weeping, through

life? Are we to keep our eyes for ever fixed on the coffin, and the shroud, and the tomb, and the lifeless tenant that inhabits it? Are we to poison the enjoyments of the present hour by melancholy anticipations of the future? Are we churlishly to despise the favors of heaven because, forsooth, they are limited in their duration? Are all the interests and pleasures of life to be slighted and neglected because we shall be separated from them by death? Must the pursuits of industry, the relaxations of amusement, the delights of society, the gratifications of conviviality, the sweets of friendship, the comforts of domestic life, the cultivation of the sciences and of the elegant arts, must all these be prematurely abandoned as altogether undeserving our attention, because we shall be at length compelled to resign them? No, my friends, such is not the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; nor is such the doctrine which it is my design at present to inculcate, as I hope to make it appear in the sequel of this instruction.

Remember then, my friends, that in expatiating on the folly of that attachment to the transitory things of earth, manifested in the conduct of the generality of mankind, I distinctly describe the object of my censure to be an *inordinate* attachment. By an inordinate attachment to worldly things is to be understood that extravagant affection for them which proceeds from an undue estimation of them beyond their just value. That the temporal possessions and advantages of this

life have certain degrees of value, and that as such, they are deserving of a proportionate measure of regard, it were ridiculous affectation in me to deny. They are considered, indeed, in that light in the sacred Scripture, which represents them as emanating from that munificent Being, "who openeth his hand, and filleth with his blessings every living creature." They are to be viewed as alleviations of the hardships and troubles of our probationary state; as refreshments scattered over that strange land, through which we are travelling to our true country, to cheer and invigorate us in our toilsome journey. As such, therefore, it behoves us to consider them, and as such we may be permitted gratefully to enjoy them. But, unfortunately, men too frequently forget the nature of these objects, as well as that of the situation in which they are placed. They forget that they are travellers; and that the good things which they meet with in their journey were only meant to be temporary refreshments; and hence they sit down to them as to a permanent feast; and in their eagerness to gratify their craving appetites, they lose sight of that heavenly land of promise to which their views should be principally directed. My object is to dissipate, if possible, so deplorable a delusion, and to awaken your minds to more just conceptions, both of your present condition, and of your future destiny. Contemplate then, O ye sons and daughters of Eve, contemplate the nature of your present state.

Lift up your eyes, O ye children of immortality, and fix them stedfastly on your future destination; weigh them both in the scales of the sanctuary, and you will soon see which of the two will be found to preponderate. You will soon perceive that the light and momentary advantages of this transient scene are not worthy to be compared with that immense and eternal weight of glory which is reserved for you in Heaven. What in reality, are the former but the perishable accommodations of a tabernacle, shortly to be dissolved, and every moment tottering to its fall? Whilst the latter will be a source of inexpressible delights, eternal as the existence of an immortal spirit. Can there possibly be a doubt which of the two has the superior claim to your regard? Or can you hesitate a single moment to decide which should be the principal object of your pursuit? You censure the folly of the extravagant youth, who squandering away, in senseless prodigality, the rich inheritance of his paternal estate, is doomed to pass the remainder of his days in poverty and wretchedness. But is there any comparison between the folly of such an one, and that of a man, who by the lavish dissipation of the goods which he has received from his Father, who is in Heaven, in gratifying the importunities of his corrupt propensities, renders himself poor and miserable for eternity? Truly, my friends, if the conduct of the former is chargeable with folly, I know not by what other name to stigmatize the comport-

ment of the latter, than that of absolute and downright insanity.

Such then being, as upon a fair estimate it evidently appears, the incomparable superiority of the goods of eternity above those of time, it certainly must be acknowledged to be a business of the highest moment to every individual to look with a searching and impartial eye into the state of his soul, to examine diligently if there be not some secret sins, some lurking defects or imperfections at least which may militate against the interests of his everlasting welfare. Consider then, my friends, in the first place, if there be no inordinate and criminal passions concealed within your breasts ; if there be no evil thoughts—no unchaste desires—no corrupt propensities, which you may fondly persuade yourselves to be nothing more than tender sentiments of affectionate sensibility. See also, if there be no other disorders in the affections of your hearts ; if pride, vanity, envy, jealousy, anger, or malice, does not excite commotions within them. Does your external conduct never indicate the secret influence of those turbulent inmates ? Do no animosities and dissensions—no uncharitable reports or insinuations—does no angry and offensive language—no haughty and contemptuous demeanour betray their mischievous ascendancy over you ? Oh ! my friends, examine yourselves carefully on all these points ; and should the result of your serious and unbiassed examination be a conviction of your

guilt in any of these respects, prostrate yourselves with all humility before the great Searcher of hearts, confess it without disguise, bewail it with feelings of penitential sorrow, and enter, without delay, on the work of reformation. Nor does even the highest degree of perfection that human nature can arrive at place a man above the necessity of self-examination. "Let him who thinks he stands beware lest he fall." Let your advancement, therefore, in virtue, my pious friends, be accompanied with an attentive and jealous watchfulness over the workings of your hearts. Never allow that important duty of self-examination to be omitted by you upon any consideration. Your very virtues should urge you to be punctual in this respect, that you may preserve them from the contamination of pride and vain-glory. Besides, my friends, the most perfect amongst us, the least imperfect I should have said more properly, will find, in scrutinizing diligently his heart, much room still remaining for correction and improvement. And this discovery will have the beneficial effects of keeping him humble under the attainments he may have already made, and of animating him to greater and more vigorous exertions in his virtuous career. For the consciousness of his still remaining defects will render him dissatisfied with the progress he may have already made, and hence "forgetting," in the language of the Apostle, the things which are behind, "and stretching himself forth to the things that are

before, he will press towards the mark, to the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." (PHIL. c. iii. v. 13-14.)

Wherefore, my friends, whoever you may be, whatever may be your rank or condition in life, let me intreat you to institute an immediate research into all the windings and recesses of your hearts. Let me exhort you to correct whatever you may find in their inward dispositions disorderly or irregular, and to regulate them according to the pure maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the love of God be the ruling passion of your souls. To that grand and paramount principle let every other affection be subjected. Let the goods of earth be received with gratitude, and enjoyed with temperance. But let them not occupy principally your thoughts. Let the infinitely more important interests of eternity be the chief objects of your attention and care; and may the retrospect of the year which is now closing upon you, whilst, by exhibiting to you the shifting scene of "one generation passing away, and another generation coming," it reminds you so strikingly of the transient nature of your earthly existence, induce you to adopt such measures as, by the divine assistance, may secure to you hereafter a blessed immortality.

FINIS.

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